LOOK OUT FOR "GRACE LANYON'S BETRAYAL" IN NEXT WEEK'S LEDGER
A REMARKABLE STORY OF LOVE TEMPTATION, SUFFERING AND TRIUMPH

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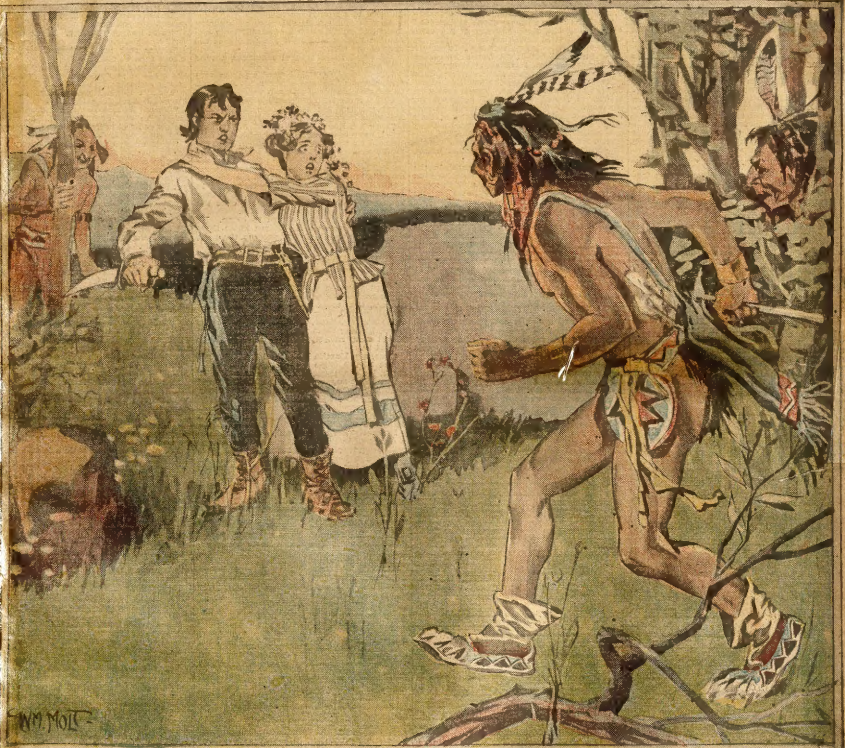

THE BLACK PHANTOM;

or, Mark Ashton's Revenge.

By ELLA MARTIN.

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THE PROLOGUE.

AWAY back in the days when wagon trains crossed the broad prairies en route to the far West, there was a certain locality in the path of their travels which bore the reputation of being haunted by a black phantom.

It was also said that an old man, with white hair and beard, inhabited a cave in the mountain side, near where the wagon trains were obliged to pass. The mouth of this cave was high up the face of the cliff, beyond the reach of Indian arrows or firearms. How he gained access to this elevated mountain retreat neither paleface nor redskin could discover. But certain it was that a white man was seen to appear at different times on a platform or rock high up the face of the mountain. This platform was overhung by a shelving rock, so steep and protruding that access to the cavern could not be obtained from above. And below was perpendicular rock.

No Indian cunning could contrive a way to reach the hermit in his mountain home, though many ingenious devices had been tried by the red men. For the Indians hated the hermit with a hatred far exceeding that for any other paleface; for they believed him to be responsible for the death of many of their tribe.

This terrible old man always appeared upon the platform in front of his cavern home at the hour of sunset; and there he would stand gazing calmly down upon the savages, who nearly always gathered before his retreat at this hour in expectation of his appearance.

And while they whooped and danced about in furious anxiety to reach him, shooting a shower of arrows which reached little more than half-way up the face of the cliff, falling back again at their feet, he merely laughed uproariously at the failure of their efforts, which only enraged them the more.

Once a few of their number had climbed the mountain side and reached the slanting, shelving rock, which overhung the entrance to the cave and made intrusion from that point impossible. And with ropes made of buckskin throngs they lowered one of their number, more daring than the rest, to a level with the rocky platform. He was armed to the teeth, but he could get no foothold here, as the rock protruded too far out over the entrance. This they understood, but it was hoped that the venturesome redskin might find a chance to send an arrow into their enemy's heart. But a well-aimed bullet from the hermit's rifle cut the rope in twain, and the savage fell at the feet of his horrified companions, a lifeless, mangled heap.

A mocking laugh was heard from above, and the baffled redskins gave vent to their disappointment by a useless shower of arrows. Then as the paleface above disappeared from sight, they picked up their fallen brave and retired to their village a half-mile distant.

It was dusk when they reached their wigwams, and gathered round their campfires in sullen, moody silence. The next moment they were startled by a cry from one of the young children of the tribe, and the group at once sprang to their feet.

"The Black Phantom! the Black Phantom!" cried a shrill voice in the Indian tongue, pointing with one dusky finger toward an open glade not far distant. The Indians turned and gazed with superstitious awe at the strange apparition.

Before them, seated on a magnificent black horse, was a tall figure draped in flowing robes of black. The horse tread the earth softly, and with proudly-arched neck; while the veiled figure sat immovable. The red men also stood motionless. It was long since a hand was raised against the Black Phantom. For they had begun to believe that the mysterious being bore a charmed life; and that a war against it would offend the Great Spirit.

Moreover, all attempts upon the life of the sable rider had been fruitless. No arrow had ever taken effect, though arrows innumerable had, in times gone by, been aimed at the strange figure; while every attempt to do harm to the phantom had been followed by the death of one of their number. No movement of the veiled being was detected, no bullet was heard to whiz through the air; but invariably a brave was seen to bite the dust, and only a small bruise was found upon the temple or forehead of the slain to indicate the manner of his death.

These poor, ignorant children of the forest, who had never heard of the Biblical David and his sling-shot, were at a loss to account for the "unseen death."

While they gazed in wonder and awe, the specter of the twilight (for at no other time of day was the Black Phantom seen by either Indian or white man) moved slowly, majestically down the glade, and was lost to their view in the gloaming beyond.

Such was the condition of affairs along the route most frequently traveled by prairie schooners at the time this story opens.

CHAPTER I.

THE WAGON TRAIN.

It was a bright, balmy day in early spring, when a number of covered wagons wound their way slowly o'er the smooth prairies, and finally halted not far from the base of a mountain; for here it was thought water might be found. There were nine wagons in all, whose occupants were bound for the frontier, and were thus banded together for safety. For it was well known that the country was infested with several tribes of hostile Indians; tribes that were at war with one another as well as with the whites.

An experienced scout had been procured as guide to conduct them over the plains to a place of safety beyond the Indian country. A scout who must return alone, but who was utterly fearless, and possessed of a cunning that matched that of the red men. Hal Wilson, generally known as "Hal, the Scout," was a character known and admired throughout the Northwest.

Among the young folks of the party were Bessie Hill and her younger sister, Delia; and Bessie's lover, Robert Hamlin. The love of these two was not supposed to be known to any one except Delia, whom Bessie had taken into her confidence. For well the lovers knew that their respective parents would consider them both too young to think of either love or marriage. But often had they been aided in their plans for clandestine meetings and secret correspondence by the sympathizing Delia. And the train of events that followed, and all the trouble connected with them, resulted from the secret love affair of these two young people.

It was late in the afternoon when the wagon train drew up under some trees a short distance from the base of a mountain. The scout had called a halt at this particular spot because there was a spring not far distant, which, if it had not become filled up since his last journey along this route, would furnish abundance of water for the movers and their teams.

He ordered the wagons drawn up so that they faced one another, leaving a space between for the campfires, and a refuge for the women and children; also a barrier for the men provided an attack was made by Indians. Then, shouldering his rifle, he disappeared from view among the trees.

"Somehow I begin to feel afraid the moment Hal gets out of sight," remarked Mrs. Hill, following the scout with her eyes as long as his tall form was in view.

Mr. Hill laughed amusedly.

"He is only gone to reconnoiter a bit," he said, "and will not go out of hearing of a rifle shot. It is some time since he conducted a caravan along this route, and he is not quite sure about the location of the spring. However, the men think they can find water nearer."

"But what if there should be Indains about?"

"Hal will discover them if there are, you may be sure."

"Oh," breathed Mrs. Hill, "I hope he won't be gone long! I can almost feel danger in the air!"

"And you see the eyes of redskins peering from every bush," put in one of the other men, Al Sheldon, who, together with his twelve-year-old son, Ben, was engaged in taking care of the teams. "And how is it with you, eh, wife? Are you growing faint-hearted because the guide is out of sight?" he added.

Mrs. Sheldon, who was a brave-spirited woman, though frail-looking, laughed in answer, and replied:

"Not while there are so many other brave men left to protect us, and plenty of wagons to hide behind. Indians are such cowards, I am told, that they never dare show themselves. Besides, Ben, here, with his braggadocio, could frighten a half-dozen tribes away. He is spoiling for a brush with Indians; but let us hope he may be disappointed."

"I intend to be a scout when I grow up," said Ben, proudly. "And then I will get all the fighting I want."

"Most likely you will," observed Mr. Young, one of the older men, who had a couple of grown sons and their wives with him. "Scouts usually get all the fighting they want, I guess."

"I shall watch Hal, the Scout, and learn of him," continued Ben. "I have noticed some things already."

"What have you observed, by son," asked his father, "that will aid you in the profession of scouting?"

"Did you notice," asked the boy earnestly, "that Hal, the Scout, always wears moccasins?" whereupon the others laughed. But Ben, unembarrassed, went on: "And that he makes not the slightest noise when he walks, whether it is through dry grass or dead leaves? That his senses, every one of them, are ever on the alert? I believe he sleeps with one eye and one ear open. He never seems to be asleep at all when there is anything to see or hear."

"Listen to our embryo scout and guide," said one of the men, pausing in his work to gaze at Ben in amusement.

But the good-natured raillery this remark drew forth did not daunt Ben in the least, though it continued till some remark had been passed by every man, woman and child of the party. However, the work of camping for the night went on. The horses were staked out, and brushwood gathered for the campfire. The women were busy getting ready their cooking utensils; and their guide was forgotten, for the time, by every one except Mrs. Hill and Ben Sheldon.

Mrs. Hill was a timid woman, and deathly afraid of meeting with Indians before their journey was over.

Very different was Ben's interest in the scout's absence. He longed to be with him, to know what he was about, and to share the danger, if there was any to share. He began to wonder in his own mind if "Ben, the Scout," would not sound as well as "Hal, the Scout."

He looked about him to see if his movements were observed. They were all busy; several of the men had gone to look for water, not waiting for Hal's return. There must be other springs, they concluded.

Under the pretense of looking for firewood, Ben moved away, not quite in the direction the scout had taken; but as soon as the bushes hid him from view of the camp, he changed his course, and silently as a shadow moved away on his friend's trail. He had his rifle, and was not afraid.

And now that he was out of sight of the others, and free from the fear of their banter, he assumed the manner of a scout. And bending forward, his senses alert, he glided through the forest without a sound. He was trying to find his friend's trail; but before examining the ground for footprints, he took a survey of the locality around him, to guard against surprise from redskins, should there be any lurking near. As a matter of fact, Ben had no idea there was one in the country. He was simply getting himself in training.

It was impossible to find the footprints of the guide on the dry earth; but at last he discovered a broken twig, and farther on a bent blade of prairie grass. The young, self-styled scout was elated; for without the closest scrutiny these evidences of where footsteps had passed could not have been discovered.

He was progressing, he believed, and he pressed on noiselessly as before.

Suddenly he started, and stood motionless, his heart thumping like a trip-hammer against his breast. For the sound of short, sharp yells, or yelps, as they may more properly be termed, preceded by one prolonged whoop, reached his ears. They came from a distance, and so faintly, that he could not determine their nature. But unhesitatingly he pressed forward.

Hitherto, as has been intimated, his caution of movement had been only with a view to acquire traits necessary to a scout and guide. But now that he knew there were other living things besides the members of his own party in the woods, his caution became a necessity, and was more pronounced than before. He looked to the priming of his rifle, peered keenly around him, and moved on.

Presently the yells he had heard grew louder, and Ben doubted no longer that there were savages in the vicinity. He knew he ought to return to camp and report his discovery to his people. But the desire to learn more, and obtain some definite knowledge of what they were likely to encounter, held him for a moment undecided to the spot.

As he was about to go on, a low, hissing sound, like that of a rattlesnake, reached him, and he paused again and listened.

The sound did not seem to come from the ground; besides, he knew it for one of the scout's signals. He cast his eyes about him, but could see nothing. Then a bird's note softly cleft the air, another signal that the scout had taught him. He ventured to answer, ever so softly, and presently discovered Hal's tall, lean figure tightly pressed against a tree near by.

On being seen the latter stepped forth smiling.

"Ah, my boy! you are doing some reconnoitering on your own account, I see. Well, what have you discovered?"

The scout spoke low from force of habit.

"Redskins," replied the boy promptly, in a tone as low as the other's.

"Right you are, lad. But there is no danger of us being seen or overheard. For every mother's son of them have left their village, a half-mile distant, in the hands of squaws only; and they are now so occupied they couldn't hear thunder. I have been to their wigwams. Ah, Ben! you are turning green with envy! Never mind! you shall go with me to that village of wigwams this very night; but not until after the braves have returned.

"Come, and you shall see what they are up to now. You are not afraid?"

The eager eyes of the lad spoke plainly in the negative.

"Had they found water when you left?" the scout asked, as they moved on.

"They were searching."

"Then they have found it, for there is water to be had not far away, as I happen to know. I told then where to look. The spring I was looking for I found, and was returning when I saw you skulking among the trees. I knew you were looking for me. "We will return now whence we came. And mark me, boy, you shall look upon a sight such as your two eyes never saw before. But first you must promise me you will obey me unquestioned, no matter how my commands may appear to you."

"Yes," breathed Ben, eagerly, "I will not hesitate a moment to obey you, for I shall know your judgment is best."

"Well, to begin with, do not shoot upon any provocation without a signal from me. Now, as we go along, let me prepare you for the sight you will soon behold. As you are doubtless able to guess, there is a band of redskins assembled at the base of yonder cliff, the top of which you can see from here. We will not need to go much farther to behold what shall take place, even though we shall not be able to see the savages, on account of the trees. Keep your eyes on the face of the cliff directly under that overhanging rock. Ah!"

At that moment an old man, with snowy locks and flowing beard, appeared from under the jutting rock as if coming out of the face of the cliff.

He stood there several moments, serene and smiling.

The cries of fury that went up from several scores of savage throats were enough to congeal the blood in one's veins.

Ben felt the hair raise on his head, but he only grasped his rifle more firmly, and looked at the scout for an explanation.

"I do not know the secret of it, my boy, but I have heard of this thing before; how this old man appears just at sunset, and remains in view a short time, solely to tantalize the Indians, who believe him responsible for the death of a score or more of their braves. I am told that the Indians annually move their camp to this place in the hope of capturing him. It would mean prolonged torture at the stake, if once the red devils got their fingers on him.

"But now we must return to camp. Do not let the women and children know there are Indians about. I will prepare the men, and you and I will mount guard tonight."

Meanwhile, in the absence of the two scouts, Bessie Hill and Robert Hamlin had arranged, with Delia's help, a little interview of their own. The two girls had strolled together beyond the limits of the camp ground under pretense of seeking wild flowers, that must by this time be peeping above ground, coaxed there by the spring rains and sunshine. Mrs. Hill called after them, bidding them not to go far, and then forgot them entirely, having other duties to attend to.

Once, Mr. Hamlin had called for Robert to assist him, but no Robert had responded. Then, he, too, thought no more about it.

But when supper time came it was found that the four young folks were missing. Mrs. Hill was the only one concerned, she left the corral, going as far as the edge of the bushes, and calling guardedly the names of the absent ones.

Presently Delia appeared, emerging from a clump of bushes near by, her hands filled with long fronds of dry moss, plucked from the bark of trees.

Tossing her head to shake back the sunny curls from her brow, Delia exclaimed:

"Oh, mamma! I wish we might stop right here, and live out of doors forever and forever! This spot is a perfect Eden!"

As this was hardly the truth, Mrs. Hill wondered at her daughter's enthusiasm.

"Where is your sister, Delia?"

"You don't know how many kinds of birds I have seen—and one nest! And, oh, mamma——"

"Is Bessie coming?"

"And the atmosphere is so balmy! I love spring! And——"

"Where is Bessie, Delia? Cease your chatter, and answer me!"

"Bessie?" surprisedly. "Oh, she can't be far away; she must be coming now."

At that moment Hal and Ben appeared, and expressed themselves as possessing a good appetite.

"And Ben has been absent also!" cried Mrs. Hill. "Mrs. Sheldon, are you not afraid that child will get into some trouble? He is so venturesome and fearless!"

"Ben," said his mother, "where have you been?"

"To find Hal. And I found him!"

"Don't do it again, my child; something might happen to you."

"Or something might happen to us in your absence," said his father, laughing. "We need some protection in the absence of our guide."

"Here's to Ben Sheldon, the young scout!" exclaimed Will Allen, a young and humorous party, holding his tea-cup aloft. Several of the others followed suit, and Ben blushed with pleasure at hearing himself called a scout, though he knew it was all merriment at his expense.

A laugh went round the campfire as the tea-cups were drained, and in the merriment Bessie and Robert were, for the time, forgotten.

CHAPTER II.

THE BLACK PHANTOM.

While the merry chat went on within the enclosure made by the wagons, Bessie and Robert were seated in a little glade in the wood, on a large moss-grown rock which the sisters had discovered in their search for wild flowers. And they also had forgotten all but themselves and their own affairs. Till suddenly Bessie heard a whip-poor-will, which recalled her to a realization of the lateness of the hour.

"Oh, Robert, we must return! See, it is quite dusk! We may not be able to find our way back, if it grows dark. Listen! there is another whip-poor-will answering; only he seems to be farther away.

"Hark! Ah, there is something strange in the notes of those whip-poor-wills—something that makes me feel as if they are not quite genuine. I wonder if there are Indians in these woods."

"Yes, we ought to return now," Robert replied. "The folks will miss us. Delia told me where to find you. I had only to follow the route she had marked out by breaking the bushes along the way. What a dear child she is, Bessie."

"Child! She is seventeen. You know I am nineteen."

"And do you know, Bessie, though she is so young, for she is scarcely more than a child, I believe she is growing fond of Will Allen?"

"While his brother Carl is fond of her," replied Bessie.

"And Will Allen is in love with you, Bess. No, don't shake your head and blush. I believe he hates me, and would gladly see me scalped by Indians."

"He may experience the pleasure and horror combined of seeing us both scalped if we remain here much longer. Or, rather he could look where the scalps have been; for I suppose they would leave us here on this mossy boulder clasped in each other's arms."

"Oh, there isn't any danger. Hal must be back by this time, and if there was danger he would have been searching for us. But do you know, Bessie, what I should do were I ever to behold these golden locks dangling from the belt of a savage?"

Bessie opened her blue eyes wide and pursed her red lips.

"Can't imagine, Robert. What would you do?"

"Never rest until I had massacred the whole race of redskins."

"Poor redskins! Would you stop to take the scalp of every one of them?" asked the young girl mischievously.

"I don't think I would have time," answered Robert, laughing also.

"Listen! Robert, there are mourning doves calling to one another now. How sad it makes one feel to listen to mourning doves."

"Then I wouldn't listen to them, dear."

"It is always at that melancholy hour," continued the girl, unheeding the interruption, "when the atmosphere is so still, that they sit and mourn; and they always seem so far away. Their call never sounds near by, like that of the whip-poor-will; and one never sees them, at least, I never do."

"Oh, I have seen them," said Robert, "and killed them, too."

"Killed them! Oh, Bob! no wonder they sit and mourn!"

And Bessie's silvery laugh rang out on the balmy air.

"I believe you have killed the mate of every one of them; that's why they mourn so. And that is worse than killing Indians for taking my scalp."

"Are you serious, Bessie?" Robert asked, his soft gray eyes seeking hers, and his arm finding its way around her waist. He had not dared do this before, lest he should frighten her away. She was like a will-o'-the-wisp, and danced away from him if he chanced to get too near.

But now she hid her laughing face for one little moment on his breast.

"Bessie, are you serious in your love for me?"

"I think so," mischievously.

"Bessie, you are a witch! you have bewitched me till I cannot tell daylight from dark."

"Any one would know that, otherwise you would see it is getting dark now, and insist on taking me home. It is surely time you got unbewitched."

For answer Robert stole a kiss, which did not seem to displease her.

"I like staying here," he remarked, when her full lips met his for the first time unresistingly. "But tell me, will you ever desert me for Will Allen?"

"That depends on whether Will Allen would be willing to annihilate the whole Indian tribe for taking my scalp."

"I love you, Bessie!"

"Of course. Ah, there are our whip-poor-wills again. They are nearer this time, and less genuine than before. Let us go, Rob; I begin to feel uneasy. They have missed us at the camp by this time, likely, and our secret will be out."

He gave her his hand without a word, and assisted her to the ground; for the boulder was large, and her feet did not quite reach the earth.

She paused a moment and looked around the little glade, as if reluctant to leave the spot where they had spent a happy half-hour together—happier, perhaps, because it was a stolen meeting. At the foot of the rock grew a tuft of wild violets. Bessie stooped and gathered them, placing a few in her bosom, and the rest in her hair. Then she turned, and smilingly placed her hand in that of her lover.

The whip-poor-will's notes sounded so clear and loud now that Bessie started, as if she expected to step on the bird if she went any farther.

"Ugh!"

This time she started in real earnest, and sprang quickly backward, for before them, directly in their path, rose the form of an Indian.

A scream was frozen on the lips of the young girl, while Robert, who was scarcely twenty-one, drew himself up, and while he put one arm protectingly around his sweetheart, the other sought the knife in his belt.

But now another Indian rose from the ground, and then another, and still another, till the lovers perceived, with horror and dismay, that they were literally surrounded by Indians.

While up at the camp, at that very moment, they are playfully drinking Ben's health with tea. Ah, Ben! what are you thinking of that you have not missed Bessie Hill—merry Bessie, who is the life of the party—from your festive board? Are you dreaming of future successes that no instinct tells you that there is work at hand—work that should be done now? Do you wish to be a scout of the plains? Then begin at once! Leave the camp when no one sees you; glide away in the gathering dusk, and seek for experience now.

Does some invisible power whisper this in Ben Sheldon's ear, so softly that it seems but the night breeze sighing? At any rate, five minutes later if they had sought the "young scout," as his friends now called him, within the corral, they would have looked for him in vain.

Delia Hill had long ago grown uneasy on her sister's account, but thinking the lovers had grown interested in each other, and the woodland glade, had simply forgotten the flight of time, and risked discovering to the others their mutual attachment.

But there was nothing Delia could do, except to keep her mother's attention drawn from the subject. So the faithful sister chatted and planned how to arrange things for the night's repose.

However, timid Mrs. Hill had been worrying over Bessie ever since her younger daughter had returned alone. She began to see how things were with the young people, and now guessed pretty accurately the reason for their absence. Her only fear was that they would remain away so long it would attract attention. And like Delia, she waited, hoping and expecting them to appear every moment.

She had grown easy about the Indians since the scout's return. Surely, if he had discovered signs of their proximity he would have mentioned it. Instead she heard him telling the men the location of the spring he had ostensibly set out to seek.

Supper being over, the men gathered outside the enclosure in close consultation. It was then that the men noticed the absence of Robert; for now they were gathered together instead of being separated into family groups. Bessie's father had noticed the girl's absence, and he, like her mother, suspected the cause. They had remained silent expecting the two to put in an appearance before it should grow dark. And Robert's parents were silent for the same reason.

"We need every man," said the scout, and then it was they missed Robert.

"He can't be far off," said one. "And the savages will not think of attacking us before dark."

"It is nearly that now. See, it is quite dusk."

Before this Ben had missed the truants; and being at a loss where to commence in his chosen calling, he determined to begin by discovering the whereabouts of the lovers. He was beginning to fear they were lost in the forest. He had no idea of the direction they had taken, but directed his footsteps toward that part of the wood from which emanated the notes of whip-poor-wills.

As was becoming habitual to him, his movements were stealthy and soundless. And Ben did a more daring thing than even he dreamed of, when, in mocking the whip-poor-wills, which he supposed to be Robert's imitation of the scout's signal, he answered that of the savages.

How it was that Ben was left undiscovered by the Indians, unless their being so intent on capturing the lovers dulled their senses, robbing them of their usual cunning, is a mystery.

But Ben was very cautious, and once he had suspected the presence of Indians it would have been next to impossible for them to get hold of him. His noiseless skulking through the bushes would have done credit to a redskin. But he was hardly prepared for the sight that met his eyes when he beheld the circle of savages spring up, at it seemed from the ground, and surround the couple he was searching for.

He halted instantly, crouching at the foot of the tree he had been leaning against. The Indians had their backs toward him, and no instinct warned them that another paleface was near.

"Ugh!" said the foremost Indian again, as Robert drew himself up undaunted. "Ugh! heap good squaw. Make wife for great chief."

"No," answered Robert, "she paleface's squaw. Palefaces must go now."

A humorous grunt went around the circle, and one brave stepped forward and lifted the shining, silken tresses of the now fainting Bessie.

"Heap nice scalp! if chief no take wife, me take scalp."

Robert was horrified, and felt himself helpless. He had no revolver, moreover, weapons were useless, pitted, as he was against such numbers; and he decided to go with them peaceably to their camp, should they demand it, and trust to Providence and his own efforts to escape before harm could overtake them.

"Will palefaces come, or——"

The sentence was finished by the throw of a tomahawk, which was significant. It struck quivering in the tree beside which Robert stood, and the Indians grunted humorously at the start he gave.

"Indian hit tree easy. Just as easy hit paleface. Come!"

Robert's mind began to work with lightning-like rapidity, but to no purpose. He could not think of any ruse that would get them out of the hands of their captors. If he resisted, he would be instantly tomahawked, and Bessie led away a captive. By yielding he might be allowed to live, he reasoned, until he could think of some way to aid Bessie.

"Go," he said, "I follow." Whereupon the first speaker turned and led the way, while the rest brought up the rear. Robert was obliged to carry Bessie for some distance before she revived, and then he had to whisper hopeful and reassuring words to allay her fright.

He blamed himself now for lingering in the woodland when he knew it was time to return. But it was too late for regrets.

"Here's a go!" muttered Ben to himself, as he followed after. He had been debating with himself the best course to pursue. Should he return to the camp and give the alarm? They would find out for themselves before long that the young couple was missing. And the scout knew the location of the Indian village. Therefore, he thought it best to keep in the wake of the Indians and their captives, and perchance some incident might occur that he could take advantage of for their relief.

It was while Ben was following his friends to the Indian village that the men at the camp were preparing to withstand an attack from the savages. But before these preparations were completed a startled cry from one of the women drew their attention, and looking in the direction pointed out, they were equally startled at the strange sight.

The same magnificent black steed, the same statuesque, draped figure that the reader recently met at the Indian camp was standing motionless before them. The horse and rider were as still as death itself, though the sable robes fluttered slightly in the evening breeze. A spectre from another world, it seemed to those who gazed.

No one spoke or moved; they scarcely breathed in their amazement. And thus they gazed in silence for several moments.

Then Hal, the Scout, breathed audibly the words:

"The Black Phantom!"

CHAPTER III.

CONSTERNATION.

The name was repeated, and passed from lip to lip till it finally reached poor Mrs. Hill, who gasped for breath and sank trembling to her knees, her hands clasped, her eyes strained in her efforts to see the phantom form in the deepening dusk. Her continued anxiety on her child's account had made her fanciful.

Only the scout knew that horse and rider to be tangible. All the rest believed they looked upon a spectre from the other world. It looked so shadowy and indistinct in the gloaming.

Hal had heard of the Black Phantom, and the charmed life he was supposed to bear. He was thinking now that the phantom might be of use to them, if he knew how to enlist his services.

"My God! Bessie!" moaned Mrs. Hill. "Where is she? Oh, where is she?"

But no one heeded her, for the silence now was broken by a murmur that ran through the crowd. No one understood the mystery of the apparition, though the scout had heard some things concerning the habits of this sable rider.

At last the coal-black steed began to move, slowly and majestically, with prancing step and proudly-arched neck. Directly in front of Hal the horse came to a stop for a moment, and a paper fluttered down and lay at the feet of the scout. Then the silent figure rode slowly away, being swallowed up in the gloom of the fast-falling night.

Hal seized the paper the moment it touched the ground, and had it unfolded by the time the others had realized what had happened.

"What is it? What is it?" asked the men, crowding around Hal. "Bring it to the light, and read it at once; it may be important."

But Hal was at the fire almost before the words were uttered; and stooping so that the light would shine upon the paper, he read the words thereon:

"Break camp at once and move on. There are hostile Indians within a half-mile of here, and you will be attacked. There is no time to lose. Be warned, and follow the advice of the Black Phantom."

There was consternation in the camp when the note was read. Some half-dozen men and women had possessed themselves of its contents over the scout's shoulder, and the proximity of the savages was no secret to the women now.

"Oh, let us follow his advice and move on!" cried one, "it may be we can elude them in the darkness. Perhaps they have not discovered us yet, and we will be far away by daylight. Oh, let us go at once!"

"Not without Bessie!" cried Mrs. Hill, "not without Bessie! and she is not here!"

And now that all were cognizant of the young girl's absence, it was soon noted that Robert Hamlin and Ben Sheldon were also missing; and even stout-hearted Mrs. Sheldon was distracted.

"Trust Ben to take care of himself, Mrs. Sheldon," said Hal, reassuringly, "he has the soft tread, the quick eye, and all the other instincts of the scout."

"And a brave heart," added one of the men. "Don't be so modest, Hal; it requires a brave heart to be a scout."

"Well, Ben has that, and caution besides. No Indian would ever discover him in the woods; he couldn't be distinguished from the bark of a tree, so cunning is he at strategy and imitation."

"But Bessie!" moaned Mrs. Hill, "and Robert! Delia, come here!"

The trembling Delia stepped forward. She knew that she must now betray the secret of the lovers.

"Where is your sister? I saw you go away together; where did you leave her?"

"She went with Robert for stroll, mamma. I can lead the way to the very place. Have papa come with me, and we will find them."

"No," said Hal, who was standing near, "no one but myself must undertake such a mission. Get your horses hitched to the wagons," he directed, addressing the men, "and be ready to start at a moment's notice. Have your firearms handy, and sentinels posted. Now, my girl, show me the direction your sister and her escort took."

Delia motioned him to follow her, her heart too full to speak. She led him some distance from the wagons, and then gave him directions, and described the location of the little woodland glade with the mossy rock embosomed in its shadow.

"Oh, sir! if you will only find them!" cried the girl, wringing her hands. "Something must have happened to them, or they would never have staid so late. They meant to come sooner."

"I will do my best, little one. Go back to the wagons, and keep close. There may be redskins about; and there are quite enough people missing without your exposing yourself to danger."

Delia went slowly back, while the scout plunged into the depths of the forest.

Outside the corral she met Carl Allen.

"Delia!"

The voice had pleading in it, and some instinct warned the girl that words she would not care to hear were trembling on his lips. She interrupted him:

"Oh, Carl! come back at once, and help the men get ready to move. We must start as soon as ever Bessie and the boys are found!"

"The work is nearly completed, and they do not need me longer. Delia, I want an answer tonight—now, before the fight, if there is to be one. Something might happen to me, and I would never know."

"Oh, Carl! did I not give you my final answer before we left home? I cannot change it. Do not let us talk about it any more."

"Delia, would you break my heart?"

"No, Carl, but——"

"Then promise to marry me some day."

Delia glanced into the earnest gray eyes above her, and began to be sorry for the young man. But her thoughts wandered to his brother Will, and then her heart fluttered and her cheeks crimsoned. She knew that Will did not care in the least for her; that his affections were fixed on her sister, who cared not one iota for him, and she felt sorry for him also. She would not acknowledge that she herself stood in need of pity, but in spite of herself a wave of self-pity swept over her and brought the tears to her eyes. Her own love was hopeless, and she was unfortunate enough to inspire the love of another, knowing that she could not reciprocate it. And yet, deep down in her heart, she knew this gray-eyed lad, who loved her, was very much the superior of his brother, whom she had allowed herself to love.

Delia, though younger than Bessie, was of a more thoughtful, and serious nature; and these troubles of the mind made her more thoughtful. She longed with all her heart to tell Carl he might hope. She had grown fond of his bright ways and frank countenance. But then, he was Will's brother, and she could not help loving him in a degree. And so she reasoned that it was not the right sort of love to marry on.

But Will, her hero, her king! she had made an ideal of him so long she felt she could not cease worshiping him now; and therefore, she must steel her heart against Carl's pleadings. He was older than Carl, and handsomer. His eyes were gray, like Carl's, his hair the same soft brown; but while Carl's face was smooth and boyish, though earnest and thoughtful, his was mustached and humorous.

Perhaps it was the opposite in their natures that attracted Delia to Will. He was seldom serious, and his gray eyes danced with fun at the slightest provocation. But Delia had seen but one side of his character; for good-natured generally, he could be very stern and relentless on occasion.

There was silence for a few minutes, then Delia said:

"I am too young to be sure of my own mind. You must wait. That is all the hope I can give you. Let us say no more about it. There is danger tonight, we may none of us live to see the morrow.

"It is quite dark now, and Bessie is not here! Oh, what has become of her? What will this night bring forth?" Delia put her hands to her face, and wailed out the last words pitifully.

"Robert is with her," Carl hastened to assure her, and taking her hands he drew them from her face and held them between his own unrebuked.

"We are ready to start now, though they have not changed the position of the wagons, in case of an attack. Come, we must go inside the enclosure. It may be dangerous to remain here longer."

Delia went willingly, for she wanted to escape the importunities of her lover. The moment she was inside her eyes wandered involuntarily around in search of the face and form she loved best. But Will Allen was nowhere to be seen. She approached her mother, who was now almost hysterical, and as she could not ask for Will, she inquired the whereabouts of her father.

"He is outside, some of the men have to act as sentinels till Hal's return, and we can move on. We are in imminent danger, child, and none of us may live to see the morning. Oh, why did we ever undertake so dangerous a journey?"

"The scout will know what is best for us to do, mother; and he will soon be back. Don't lose heart, the savages may not know of our presence here."

"Hal can not return till he has found the young people. Oh, why did Bessie do such a foolish thing!"

Delia hung her head in silence; she felt guilty in a measure, for having aided her sister without her mother's knowledge.

Poor Mrs. Sheldon was silent, but her heart misgave her, and she stood with tightly clasped hands, and eyes straining out into the darkness. But she hoped for the best. She was stout-hearted and brave, and she knew Ben was as capable of taking care of himself as one of his age could be. And Robert's parents looked at the matter somewhat in the same light; they hoped for the best, and believed Robert capable of taking care of himself and Bessie.

Do not think, reader, that Will Allen, who we know loved Bessie, was inactive all this time, while she was in danger, though she had gone with the man she preferred to himself. He had hustled to get his share of the work done, and then, without informing the rest of the party of his intentions, he took the direction the scout had taken when he left the camp under Delia's guidance. What he intended to do he did not know, but there was fight in him now, and it would have fared ill with any redskin that might have crossed his path at that moment. His laughter and good-humor had vanished, and his brow was black as night.

He knew that Bessie and Robert had either fallen into the hands of the Indians, or had lost their way, and were wandering around or traveling in the wrong direction.

"She needs a man to protect her, wherever she is," he muttered to himself. "What good is Robert? A lovesick fool! Any man in his senses ought to have known better than to have led her away from camp."

Small consideration Robert would have received at that moment had he ran across the missing pair. He would have ignored Robert's claim, and taken the young girl back to camp under his own protection.

But no trace of any one did he find in the forest. And he was about to return when he beheld a signal fire, and then another, and still another. He understood they were for the purpose of calling the red men together; and he knew that danger threatened the movers. He hurried now toward the wagons, for he realized that every man was needed to protect the women and children, and he doubted not that an attack would be made before midnight.

It was useless for him to search longer in the darkness; he must trust to the scout to find them. But down in his heart he cursed Robert for a fool.

He was half-way to camp when he heard a sound directly in front of him—a signal call of one Indian to another. It was too dark to see the form before him distinctly, but evidently it was a redskin who had taken his approaching footsteps for those of his companion. But if so, where was the companion he had signaled to? Not near enough it would seem to hear and return an answer.

Without another second's hesitation Will sprang forward and seized the savage by the throat, so fiercely that not a sound escaped him. With a strength born of desperation, for Will knew he must prevent his calling for aid at all hazards, he held on despite the other's struggles, till finally the struggles ceased, and he let him sink gradually to the earth.

He then drew a stout leather string from his pocket and bound the Indian's hands together firmly; then he tied another cord to that and wrapped it about his own hand, so that a sudden jerk could not wrest it from him, and kicked the inert form on the ground until he roused him from insensibility.

"Get up!" he commanded.

The Indian rose slowly to his feet, only to find the cold muzzle of a revolver pressed to his temple, a language he could well understand.

"No make noise!" Will ground out between his teeth. "Heap kill Indian he make noise."

And he started for camp with the savage in tow. Their progress was necessarily slow, for the moon had not yet risen, and the underbrush was dense. But finally, after he had begun to fear that he was bearing away in the wrong direction, he saw an opening in the wood, and the outlines of the wagons and horses.

He called in a guarded tone to the sentinels, whom he could discern on the edge of the camp grounds, with arms presented.

"Ah, it is Will!" they exclaimed in low tones. "We missed you, and wondered. There are quite enough missing tonight without you. Whom have you there?"

A suppressed scream from the women, who, in a group, were peering between the covered wagons, interrupted the questioning.

"An Indian, as I live! What are you going to do with him?"

"Keep him as a hostage," replied Will. "Tie him securely inside the corral and set a guard over him. Then when Hal returns we will send him to the wigwams to negotiate an exchange of prisoners."

A moan from Mrs. Hill told the speaker she understood him to be convinced that the absent ones had been taken captives.

"Do not worry, Mrs. Hill," he said, turning over the captured Indian to the men who stood ready to dispose of him according to Will's instructions. "Trust all t Hal, he is familiar with the ways of th savages, and will not fail to find some means to restore your daughter to you arms."

She could not answer for the sobs that choked her utterance. At the same moment Ben's mother was crouching at the other end of the enclosure with clasped hands and strained, tearless eyes.

Among the movers was another young girl, named Hazel King, whom we have had no occasion to mention before. She was not so youthful as the two we have presented to the reader, being not less than twenty-five; but she was more courageous than all the rest of the women put together. At that very moment she was lying flat upon the ground, her head under one of the wagons, and her pistol aimed, as nearly as was possible in the darkness, at two gleaming eyes that were on a level with hers. The eyes were creeping nearer and nearer, almost imperceptibly, but still she knew they were nearer than when she first discovered them. And now she was convinced that a single savage was creeping, or rather wriggling, inch by inch on his stomach between the sentinels, who were keeping a lookout over his head, never dreaming the danger lay at their feet.

She could guess pretty accurately that this savage, coming as he did singly, was a spy sent out to determine their numbers and strength, and that he would as silently withdraw when he had learned all he wanted to know, which she did not intend to permit. But her judgment told her she must shoot only as a last resort, lest the sound of the shot should be the means of bringing a whole pack of redskins down upon them.

At that very moment Delia approached her, and Hazel, warning her to be silent by a touch of the hand, whispered:

"Bring me one of the men without making a noise. Tell him first that a redskin is creeking into camp, and must be tomahawked or otherwise disposed of without sound."

Delia, frightened and trembling, glided away to do the girl's bidding. It was Will Allen she found and delivered the message to. He went at once to the wagon underneath which Hazel kept her watch, and under cover of the darkness was shown the two gleaming eyes. Then he drew his knife from his belt and made her understand by gestures that he would leave the corral, take a circuitous course, and come up behind the creeping savage unawares. He felt sure it was the companion of the one he had captured while he was in the act of signaling.

Will set out on his dangerous undertaking, but in some way the savage scented danger before he was near enough to clinch with him, and with a wild whoop he sprang to his feet and darted away in the darkness.

Just then a rifle shot rang out on the night air and startled the echoes of the forest; and the next moment, with smoking rifle in his hand, Hal, the Scout, stepped into the clearing.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INDIAN VILLAGE.

Let us return to Ben Sheldon, whom we left stealthily following the Indians who had captured Bessie Hill and Robert Hamlin. It was now so dark in the woods that he could scarcely see the outlines of their forms, for he was obliged to keep some distance in the rear. However, it was not necessary to be so cautious as before, as the Indians themselves made noise enough to cover the sound of his footfalls. And if a twig snapped, or a leaf rustled they evidently thought the noise made by one of their own number. They seemed not to deem it necessary to be cautious in their movements now that they had captured the palefaces.

They knew the wagon train could not move on without these two, and they were in no hurry about attacking it. It was more to their liking to keep the hated whites in suspense.

It was about a mile from the wagons, and one half-mile from the hermit's cavern that the Indians' tepees were located. Before the tents were campfires, in front of which the braves were lazily reclining, while the squaws were preparing the evening meal of venison and other wild game.

The tents were pitched in a small clearing, on the outskirts of which Ben was obliged to halt. He secreted himself behind a large tree outside the radius of light, and watched the savages lead the couple into the center of the village. They paused before the old chief's tent, which our young hero took to be such by its size and location.

Ben had formed no definite plan of action; he must await developments. But he had a vague idea he could contrive some way to liberate his friends. If not, he could learn by observation what was done with them, and then steal away and inform Hal, the Scout, who would surely be able to think of some plan to bring about their release in time for them to go on with the wagons before an attack was made on them by the Indians.

Ben held his breath while the savages gathered around their newly-arrived comrades. What if the captives were put to death at once, and he was obliged to witness their torture? He shuddered at the thought. For well he knew interference on his part could not aid his friends, but would only bring disaster upon himself.

He did not fear discovery now, for all eyes were centered upon the group before the chief's lodge. Only a few stragglers, mostly squaws and young children, remained near the other tepees.

Ben saw the old chief issue from this wigwam and approach the young braves who had brought in the two captives, and heard him speak what he believed to be words of commendation. Then he and several of his counselors seated themselves in a half-circle on logs placed in front of the great tent for that purpose.

Our young hero could not have understood the language they used had he been near to hear what was said. But he noticed that first one brave and then another rose and delivered a speech; and if one could judge from their dignified delivery, the speeches were not lacking in eloquence.

Then at last their chief arose, said a few words, and with a dignified gesture dismissed his counselors, whereupon the palefaces were led away.

During the consultation Bessie and Robert had borne up bravely, looking their enemies in the face, and paying strict attention to what was said, in the hope of learning what their fate was to be.

Ben saw at once that the lovers were to be separated; for Bessie was conducted to one of the lodges near the edge of the woods in the direction of Ben's hiding place. Here she was delivered over to the charge of a young Indian girl whom they called Wenona, to share her lodge and be her companion. And Ben decided that she was to be kept a captive indefinitely. With Robert it was different. He was led in another direction, and bound to a tree to await his fate. However, it was near the edge of the woods, and to the right of the place where Ben was concealed. Here he was left to his own reflections, while the bucks went back to the campfires and gathered round the supper which was now ready.

Our young scout was in doubt whether to wait till the village had become quiet, and undertake to liberate Robert, or to depart at once and inform Hal of what had happened, and trust to his sagacity to outwit the savages.

Ben thought it likely there would be sentinels set over the captives, or at least posted outside the village to guard it from surprise. But as yet it had not been deemed necessary, to judge from appearances. And if he was going to attempt anything to effect Robert's escape he must do so while the redskins were at their evening meal. But could he creep up behind Robert and succeed in cutting his bonds without being discovered? Not yet; for surely, they could not get away unseen before sleep had overtaken the red men, even if he succeeded in liberating him, and pursuit meant capture.

Besides, would he be able to persuade Robert to leave the place with Bessie a prisoner inside the Indian village? Ben was sure he would not. Therefore it would seem more practicable to return for help, and inform the scout of the young couple's predicament.

Suddenly, while he was yet undecided what to do, the shrill voice of a squaw rose on the air, calling, "Wenona! Wenona! water!"

In answer to the call the Indian girl before mentioned, issued from the lodge in which Bessie was confined, and went obediently toward the group around the campfire. At least a young girl came forth, one easily mistaken for an Indian girl at first sight. However, as he watched her he began to realize that this girl was of the white race. She was tanned, to be sure, by the suns of many summers, and dressed like one of the tribe. But it was easy to see that this girl was a slave of the squaws, probably taken captive when a child. And this was the fate in store for Bessie, Ben thought, if she was not rescued.

He watched her take the bucket and go into the wood where the spring was located. He scrutinized her closely as she passed within a few feet of where he was standing, and was more convinced than ever that no drop of Indian blood flowed in her veins. He did not fear discovery from her. She looked neither to the right nor the left, but went on with head bent in brooding, melancholy silence. He felt like staying her footsteps to assure her that friends were near, and help at hand. But he dared not; it might be a false move. After all she might belong to the tribe.

The Old Year and the New.

And now that Bessie was left alone he determined to visit her lodge before the girl returned with the water. Perhaps they could exchang a few words; he might be able to learn of Bessie what the Indians intended to do with their captives. And it might encourage her to know that a friend was near, and her situation known to her people. And while Wenona was carrying the water to the group around the fire, he could steal away again. She was bound hand and foot, he was sure of that, or Wenona could not leave her alone.

None of the Indians seemed to be concerned about their captives, or to anticipate an attack from the whites; probably because they knew they far exceeded them in numbers.

The girl, Wenona, had now disappeared in the depths of the forest, and Ben must act at once if he was to see Bessie.

Throwing himself flat on the ground, he began to draw himself along on his stomach as fast as was possible without making a noise that would attract attention. There was no danger of the girl seeing him when she returned with the water, for the grass was tall, and the bushes grew nearly up to the edge of the tent, which was outside the circle of light from the fires.

As he neared the tepee he grew more cautious, for he must avoid frightening Bessie. One scream from her would bring the whole village down upon him. He halted just behind the tent, and gave a low hiss, such as Bessie had heard him give in imitation of Hal's signal. He heard a stir within, and repeated the sound. Then he waited a moment and listened. At last came an answer to his signal. It was not very well done, but he knew that she understood. He lifted the edge of the tent and peeped under.

"Bessie!" he whispered.

Then his heart seemed to stop beating. Suppose there was another who shared the lodge with Wenona, and Bessie had not been left unguarded, after all.

"Ben!" she whispered back in a tone of surprise. Evidently, she had supposed it was Hal, the Scout, when she answered the signal. That Ben should be near her was not to be looked for. "Oh, Ben! be careful! If you should be taken prisoner you would share the same fate as poor Robert!" And there was a sob in Bessie's voice.

"Cheer up, Bess! Don't you worry about Bob. That is what I risked my life creeping up here to tell you. I am going straight home now and send Hal to liberate him. He will know how to do it. But I dare not try it myself while the red devils are astir."

"You should not have taken so much risk, Ben, it was dangerous to come here. Think of your poor mother. Have you thought of the agonies she must be enduring this very moment? Oh, go at once, before you are discovered!"

"Wait a moment, there is no danger till Wenona returns."

"Wenona! how did you learn her name?"

"The squaw who sent her for water called it aloud to all who might hear. But, Bess, is she not a white slave, taken prisoner when she was young?"

"Yes; a mere child, Ben. And she does not know who she is. She is my friend, and will help me, if she can. But she has never been able to make her own escape. She has always been watched closely when white people were near.

"But Robert! they are going to burn him at the stake! Oh, Ben! do you think Hal can save him?"

"He will save him or die in the attempt, Bessie!"

"He is a brave, noble man, but he may fail. Ben, my heart misgives me when I think how they may torture poor Robert!"

"They'll never get the chance. Hal is looking for you both, and he won't waste much time before he will come here in search of you; for he knows where the savages are camped. He has been here before today.

"But what are the Indians intending to do with you, Bessie?"

"Make a slave of me, as they have of Wenona."

"Never!" hissed Ben! "Do they suppose the palefaces will move on and leave one or more of their number in their toils? Why, I would remain behind myself to help you. Did you think for a moment that any of us would desert you? And Hal, he would annihilate the whole tribe before you or Robert should suffer at their hands."

"Oh, Ben! you don't understand, I ought to have told you the first thing! They are going to attack the wagon train tonight. At midnight, Ben! Go home and prepare them for the fight. Go at once! you must not delay! Why did I not tell you at once, without wasting the precious time talking of my own affairs? You cannot help me, dear boy, go and warn the others!"

"They are prepared, Bessie. Don't fret! I know the scout, and the moment he finds one of us missing he will know there is mischief afoot. Trust him, I doubt not his eyes are on this camp at this very moment. But tell me, does Robert know what fate awaits him?"

"Ah, no; poor fellow, he is hopeful, or appears to be for my sake. But Wenona told me in her broken English. I could not understand all, but she told me a great deal about a black phantom that the Indians fear. She says if we could escape and place ourselves in the Black Phantom's care, the Indians would not dare harm us. They believe it to be the Great Spirit."

"If it be a phantom, Bessie, pray tell me how it can protect you?"

"By frightening away the Indians. But, of course, Ben, it isn't really a phantom, it couldn't be. Wenona is all white, in spite of her long captivity and training, and she does not believe it to be an invisible spirit inside a visible covering, and riding a visible horse."

"A horse, Bessie! And what does the phantom himself took life, or rather, the covering?"

"From Wenona's description I should judge it to be a white man draped in black cloth from head to foot. His face is covered, and he rides as silently as a shadow. His steed is trained, no doubt, to a slow, majestic pace. And no matter what the Black Phantom does, the Indians never stir till he is out of sight. They are afraid, for so many of their number have met death in a way they did not understand, if they attempted to harm the specter. And Ben, I believe he could ride up and set Robert free without any interference from the Indians."

"If I could only find him!" said Ben, reflectively. "It would be better than finding the scout. We would come back together and just take you and Robert away with us. Did Wenona tell you where to find him?"

"Wenona does not know—she only hopes. She will try to find him. Go, now, Ben, go back to your mother, who is nearly distracted by this time, I am sure."

"Hush!" whispered the boy. "I hear footsteps."

"Hide quickly, Ben!"

Ben dropped the edge of the tent; and crouched down in the long grass, but he did not go away. He did not intend she should feel alone if danger was nigh. This Bessie understood, and the poor girl was frightened more on his account than on her own. For the approaching footsteps were not the light footfalls of Wenona.

The sound of steps ceased at the door of the wigwam, and there was silence for the space of a minute. Silence which seemed to forebode evil. Bessie held her breath in suspense, for lying as she did, bound hand and foot, on a couch of skins, she could see that the flap of the opening was lifted, and the doorway darkened by the form of an Indian. And though she was utterly helpless and at his mercy, her first thought was of the brave boy outside her prison.

She wanted Ben to know that the savage was there, so he would go away. So, seeing her visitor did not speak, she broke the silence by saying:

"What does red man want? Why does he come to see pale sister?"

"Ugh!" replied the Indian, who was a young brave, tall and straight and powerful. The very sight of his strength and savage mein frightened Bessie for Ben's sake, and she cried, almost hysterically:

"Go away! Oh, go away at once! Go quick!"

Ben knew these words were addressed to him—knew that the girl was listening eagerly, hoping to hear a rustling in the grass under cover of the conversation; and as soon as the savage began to speak, and could not hear the noise, he made a movement that would lead Bessie to believe he was crawling away through the grass.

The girl hearing it began to cough, lest it should be heard by other ears than hers. And when at last she ceased, all was silent without. She had not heard one word the Indian had said, and perceiving this he glared down upon her savagely.

"What does red brother want? Paleface no hear."

"Ugh!" grunted his Indianship again. "White girl no listen! Me want squaw. White girl make heap good squaw."

"Paleface will think about it," said Bessie. "Red man go away now!" She gasped out the words laboriously. She almost wished that Ben had not gone, so frightened was she lest he should stay.

And as if the boy divined this, he reached under the tent and touched the pile of skins on which she lay.

He heard her breathe a sigh of relief. She scarcely knew what she expected of the lad, but she felt less alone now; and she believed he would not hesitate to rush into the wigwam and attack the Indian with his knife should he attempt to harm her. And that she knew would be most disastrous to the boy. But the savage only grunted again and walked away.

Bessie was more concerned than ever. Being made a slave of, had less terrors for her than being the squaw of this terrible Indian.

"I had my knife ready for him," whispered Ben. "If he had touched you he would never have known what struck him."

"I was so glad you had not gone," breathed the girl.

"I knew you would be, so I just deceived you into thinking I obeyed the words you spoke to the redskin, but meant for me."

"I said them to you, child, and they came from my heart through fear for you. But I was glad you had not obeyed. But now, Ben, do go!"

"Yes, it were high time. How I wish I could speak to Bob and cheer him up a bit; but I could not get near him without exposing myself to view."

"I will send Wenona to him when it is safe. She will tell him that help is expected—that you have been here. Poor Bob! he is obliged to stand there bound to a tree, while I am permitted to lie on soft skins. But oh, how my bonds hurt!"

"Good-by, Bessie," Ben said, by way of announcing his departure, and began to retreat without waiting for a reply.

He knew that the Indian girl, as we will still call her, must have returned long ago with the bucket of water. Perhaps she had waited to eat her own supper, and prepare some for the captive in her tent.

When the boy scout thought he had gone far enough to make it safe to do so, he ceased crawling and rose carefully to his feet. He started back instantly, and nearly cried out in his surprise, for suddenly, as if rising from the ground, and directly in his path, loomed up the form of an Indian!

Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of this story of strange and wild ventures. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

Sifting Diamonds.

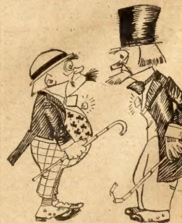
Sifting ashes is a common process, but the sifting of diamonds is of recent practice, and has been successfully in use for a few months in the lately discovered fields near Luderitz Bay, in German Southwest Africa. The process of recovering the stones is so simple as to be almost ludicrous.

The negro boys, with blue goggles on, kneel down on the sand searching for the diamonds. They are furnished with spades, and with these they proceed to fill an ordinary fine-meshed sieve. A man will then take the sieve, give it a shake and plunge it into a bath of sea-water, which has the effect of hardening the contents, while at the same time owing to the specific gravity of the diamonds the latter fall to the bottom.

The man then picks up the sieve and turns it over onto an ordinary deal table, and the diamonds are then of course on the top. He will then take an ordinary table-knife, root out the diamonds with this and carefully place them in a pickle-bottle, which stands by his side.

From the primitive simplicity of this method of working it will be seen that the diamonds do not give much trouble to find. The cost of getting them averages, in fact, from twenty-five to forty cents a carat.

Vaudevillains.



Louey—You hit him mit your cane, vonce?

Hans—Sure. How could I help ut? Didn't he say he'd like to lead our leidle German bant?

Louey—Lead our bant? Vy, dot vos gombliment.

Hans—Nein! He said he vud like to lead ut to der dog pound.

The Philpot Robbery

The Mystery of a $100,000 Theft

By Paul Gray

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CHAPTER V.

FOUND—A SON.

PHIL'S opponent was not less eager than he for the struggle that ensued. The pair tussled blindly with each other through the drapery.

"My son, my son!" a woman's refined voice quickly rose above the din. Phil glanced up and saw a richly attired matron, with her eyes and face bearing the marks of very recent tears, approaching from the inner apartment.

By this time he had managed to pinion the arms of the unknown antagonist, and uncurling the tapestry from about them, found himself looking into the face of a young man bearing the marks of incessant dissipation. He was well-dressed, but there was in his bright but shifty eyes the look of a man whose habits are not of the best and whose pursuits usually are in more or less degraded paths of crime.

"How dare you, sir?" exclaimed the woman, who was none other than Mrs. Philpot. "How dare you invade my house and make an attack like this? Let go your hold on my son!"

"I beg your pardon," said Phil, releasing his arm from about his subdued antagonist. "I did not know this was your son. I saw him peering through the curtain at me and at once concluded that he was an interloper here and might know something about the robbery. So I made a grab for him. I certainly did not know that he was your son."

Phil stepped away, but he was still near enough to the son to catch a whiff from his liquor-laden breath.

"Yes," the young man interposed unsteadily, "wha' d-d' you want to mix in f-family m-matter like t-this? D'you hear w-what my m-mother says?"

"Son? Mother?" flashed through Phil's mind as his eyes scanned every part of the apartment. "This is the first time I have heard of a son in this case—and a mighty disreputable looking one at that."

With one of his keen, searching glances, Phil inspected the man thoroughly. He was about twenty-two years old, well-dressed, but with an air of bravado that ill fitted the magnificent home of his mother. His eyes were shifty and his movements cat-like. The puffed skin about the eyes and the red-spotted nose and cheeks clearly showed unusual dissipation in so young a man.

Then across Phil's mind flashed this thought:

"This man is twenty and more years old. Philpot and his wife have been married only ten years. This needs an explanation."

Then, turning to the man, he said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know that you belonged to the house. I thought you were hiding here and might have some connection with the robbery."

"Did, eh?" was the uncertain reply. "Well, I'd l-like to k-know w-what b-business you've got to think anything about that r-robbery! It d-don't concern you any, does it?"

Phil was anxious to continue the conversation for the sake of what it might reveal, and welcomed the young man's garrulousness.

"Well, you know," replied Phil with deliberation, looking squarely into the man's eyes, "there's a few thousand dollars offered in rewards in this case, and, of course, I'd like to pocket a share of them."

The man flinched slightly under Phil's piercing scrutiny, but immediately recovered and exploded:

"Reward, eh? W-what's the likes of you t-talking about r-reward for? Y-yo' ain't no police bloke in disguise, are yo'?"

Phil had half-expected such a query in his investigation long before this, so it did not surprise him now. Moreover, he made use of it to scan the faces of the two women in the apartment. Mrs. Philpot stood near a window, grasping a chair, evidently for support. Phil thought he saw a slight shadow of alarm cross her face, but if it was that, it passed almost instantly.

On the maid's countenance, however, there was no indication of surprise or excitement. She steadily returned the keen glance Phil cast toward her. She could not have been calmer if the jewel robbery had been in Kamchatka.

"You make me laugh," Phil said, as his eyes returned to his interrogator. "I never thought of that line of business. But being a safe man, I might go into the 'blowing' game, eh? More money in that, don't you think?"

"How should I know? L-looks to me as if you w-were almighty inquisitive for a s-stranger."

"Never mind him, Carl," interposed Mrs. Philpot nervously. "Let him finish his inspection as quickly as possible and leave. He's caused sufficient disturbance already."

"Well, t-then," broke in the son, his face slightly flushing and his eyes unsteady as if from an excess of liquor, "l-et him get out o' here r-right away."

"If Mrs. Philpot says I'm to go," said Phil quietly, "of course I'll go, but I'm not taking my orders from you, sir."

"Ain't, eh? Well, y-you f-fresh g-guy, you make a q-quick g-getaway f-from here or I'll p-pitch you through a w-window." The son advanced unsteadily but threateningly. "Come, beat it." His voice rose and his arm was elevated as if to strike.

"Be careful," warned Phil, retreating a step. "I took care of you once a few minutes ago. I can do it again if necessary."

"D——n you, d-don't yo' th-hreaten me."

Even as the son spoke the outer door of the apartment swung hurriedly open and a distinguished, gray-haired man swept into the room.

"Husband," Phil heard Mrs. Philpot gasp. "I thought he was out of town."

Philpot—for it was he—glanced with surprise about the two rooms. Then he looked at his wife.

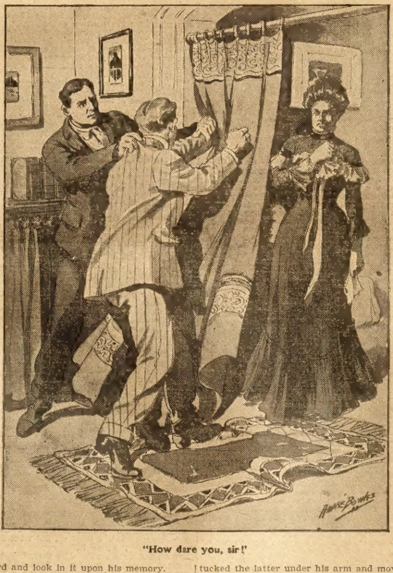
"What's the meaning of this confusion?" he asked sternly. "Have you turned your apartments into a place for a couple of strange and evidently drunken men to quarrel in?"

"Oh, no," the wife replied haltingly. "This young man"—pointing to Phil—"is from the safe company, and this—this other—is—is——"

"Your son, why d-don't yo' t-tell him?" broke in that worthy with a leer.

"Her son?" exclaimed Mr. Philpot, his gaze seeking his wife's face, which went even whiter than it had been. "I don't quite understand. You don't mean to tell me, Margaret," continued the broker as he drew his hand across his eyes as if to clear away a haze, "that you have a son of this age, of whom I have never known anything?"

Phil had retreated toward the hall door of the apartment so that his presence in this dramatic scene might not be too evident, but he did not fail to impress every word and look in it upon his memory.



"How dare you, sir!"

"Oh, I thought you had gone out of town," came like a moan from the wife, who had sunk into a chair. "Oh, why did I ever send for him!"

"Then he is really your own son?" flared Philpot, crossing to where his wife half sat, half lay, and grasping her by the shoulder fiercely.

The woman's eyes closed and her lips moved, but no sound came.

"Answer me," commanded Philpot, shaking her shoulder.

"O' course I am," broke in the son. Then, with a leer, he continued: "And I h-have b-been f-for over t-twenty years."

Philpot retreated a step or two and his eyes bored deeply into the pallid face of his wife. A deep, half-stifled sigh rose to his lips. Then, with an effort, he asked:

"Won't your own lips tell me the truth, madam?"

"He is telling the truth," whispered Mrs. Philpot after an ominous pause. "I was married, deserted and divorced before I met you. This boy was born to me from that first marriage."

"And where has he been during these years since you have been beneath my roof?"

"My mother housed him until her death. But the last few years he has shifted for himself."

"What do you call him?"

"My name is Carl Gregg," interposed the young man, "and I ain't a b-bit ash-hamed of it either. I don't see w-what r-right you've got t-to q-quiz the old lady in this way. It's b-beastly unkind."

"I'm not addressing you, young man," said Philpot sternly. Then, turning again to his wife, he asked, "And why have you kept this from me all these years?"

"Because," she began brokenly, "I feared you would not marry me if you knew it, and once married, I feared you would cease to love me if you knew it."

"How long has he been coming here in my absence?"

"Only for the past month. I had not heard of him in several years, when we met face to face on Broadway a few weeks ago."

"And you know nothing of his present associations?"

"Nothing but what he has told me. I—I fear they are not of the best."

At this interesting juncture to Phil—for he was hoping to hear more of the life of young Gregg bared—Philpot's glance caught the figure of the newspaper man in a shadow in the adjoining room.

"Here, you interloper," he exclaimed angrily, "you get out at once before I have you thrown out."

CHAPTER VI.

JANET PRICE'S PUZZLING LOOK.

Phil Pry did not wait long on the order of his going. Gathering up his few simple tools and dropping them into his grip, he tucked the latter under his arm and moved toward the door.

Quick as he was, Janet Price had prepared the way for his departure. She had first pushed a button in the wall summoning the butler. Then she opened wide the door, and as Phil crossed the threshold she slipped out after him.

As the two stood in the dim-lit hall waiting for the butler to conduct Phil out, the latter had a chance to study the girl's features at length.

Janet Price was not a beautiful girl. Her hair and eyes were black almost as jet. Her nose was slender and sensitive. Her mouth was small and thin to sternness. Her chin was decided—almost too much so for a woman. Her complexion was dark and bespoke little association with the mellowing, roughing influence of fresh air and sunshine. Yet there was something attractive in her features and in the keenness of her glance that was usually sufficient to win for her more than a casual glance.

Before Phil had time to complete his study of her face, she looked up at him without a trace of embarrassment, and said:

"You're really not a safe company employe, are you?"

Surprising as the question was, it did not catch Phil off his guard.

"Why, sure," he replied promptly, "what makes you ask such a foolish question as that?"

"Oh, you can't fool me so easily as you think. I could see in half a minute that you knew little or nothing about the real mechanism of a safe. You got in here by subterfuge. You're really a detective, aren't you, now?"

"You're dreaming," answered Phil, playing for time in which to frame an adequate match for this sharp young woman's wits.

"With both eyes wide open on you," she said briskly. "You're not the first safe company man nor the first detective that has been around here today, and I know you don't think I'm so dull as not to have observed the difference in them?"

Phil found himself involuntarily studying the unusual face of this young woman. Her words, uttered in a subdued, sweet voice that had the tones of education and refinement, spelled increasing interest to him. He wondered if it might not pay him to cultivate her further acquaintance. He instantly decided that he would make a try at it. Gazing steadily into her eyes he answered her:

"Well, to tell the truth—just to you—I'll admit that I'm not exactly a safe company employe."

Janet Price dropped back a bit, and Phil was quick to notice a momentary flutter to her eyes under his piercing scrutiny. It puzzled him, too, because the expression was not one of guilt or apprehension. It appeared to arise from some hidden influence.

When she spoke again, her voice was still more subdued and inclined to halt over her words.

"There, I knew it all the time," she said. "What is your business, then?"

"Oh, I couldn't tell you here. Besides, I hear the butler coming. I'll tell you what I'll do. I've got something important to tell you if I can see you this evening."

"Oh, I couldn't think of such a thing," the girl replied, but under the steady glance he turned on her, Phil noticed that she spoke hesitatingly, almost brokenly.

"Oh, yes, you can," he answered decisively. "It'll only take a half-hour or so and it may be mighty important to you."

"Well," she returned in a dreamy way as if responding to the dominant power of Pry's mind, "maybe I'd better see you for a few minutes if it's as serious as you say it is."

"In Central Park, then, at eight tonight," whispered Phil, observing that the butler was only a few steps away. "At the lower end of the reservoir. It's not very far from here."

"I'll try to be there," came slowly from the girl's lips.

Turning, Phil followed the butler through the house to the door at which he had sought admission. Janet, meanwhile, quietly opened the door of her mistress's apartments and stepped within. As she did so, the unsteady, dreamy look that had come into her face since Phil fastened his searching glance upon her eyes appeared slowly to dissolve.

That same dreamy look gave Phil a subject for deep consideration. He had seen the same expression on other faces, he remembered, but he could not recall when or where. He searched the nooks of his memory in trying to recall whether or not he had ever seen Janet's features before, but no identifying response came. Yet there was something uncanny and mysterious in the way in which this active, bright young woman grew hesitant and unsteady under the concentration of his eyes and mind. Had he recognized the influence then, he could have quickly and completely solved the mystery of the Philpot diamonds and have been spared many perilous and thrilling adventures in his quest for the gem thieves. But the solution temporarily escaped him and he passed down the stone walk to the barred iron gate and through that into the street. He did not give the big policeman on guard even a glance, so intent was his mind on the mystery he had in hand.

Once in the street Phil shook himself up mentally and physically. As he did so he felt a peculiar twitch in his neck. He put up his hand and carefully examined the flesh. It was not bruised, but it was exceedingly tender to the touch. At length the cause of the irritation flashed upon him.

"That promising young son up there tried to cut off my wind with that grip of his," Phil muttered to himself. "That's the crooks' favorite grip, too. I wonder what he knows about criminals? I'll just lay low around here a little while and see if I can learn anything more of him."

It was nearly six o'clock. Riverside drive was crowded with hurrying automobiles. Phil made his way to the front of the Philpot mansion and studied its windows and huge bronze doors carefully. In a minute he murmured to himself:

"Of course they never got through those doors or a window from the outside unless they had help from within. Nobody could scale that high, bare stone wall to those windows without help from some one inside or with a ladder without. Let's see about the ladder."

So Phil went back to the side gate, gained admission on the plea that he had forgotten something and then stole across the wide, terrace lawn to a point where he stood directly under the windows of Mrs. Philpot's apartments. He scrutinized the ground eagerly.

Not a trace in the soft earth could he find of any footprints beside his own. Nor was there a single mar in the grass to indicate that the ends of a ladder had been propped anywhere about.

"Here, you," growled the policeman on guard at the front gate ere the young reporter had barely finished his inspection. "What you doin' there?"

"Looking for one of my tools I've lost out of my grip," responded Phil readily. The answer sufficed to get him out of the grounds without further inquiry.

Again outside he took up his stand in a shadow across the street where he could maintain a complete watch on the front and side of the great mansion. But a few moments elapsed before the great, bronze, front doors swung open and a young man issued forth. Phil hurried across the street and stood within the shade of the high fence when the gate opened and the figure came out on the walk. The unsteady step quickly showed Phil that it was Gregg, the dissolute son of Mrs. Philpot. He walked

(Continued on page six.)

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ADDRESS ALL LETTERS TO
THE CHICAGO LEDGER
CHICAGO, ILL.

GENTLE JABS.

What Doctor Cook proved seems to have been an alibi.

In Leopold's case his venerable whiskers proved nothing.

It is also chilly for those who lack shelter, food and fire.

It's as easy to remain poor as it is not to acquire a fortune.

The wearing of veils is responsible for a lot of unkissed kisses.

It requires almost as much nerve to be a lion tamer as a book agent.

Many an artist who claims to be wedded to his art is a grass widower.

Zelaya is not the man to engage in airy persiflage with the inevitable.

Men are seldom so hopelessly deaf that they cannot hear money talk.

A man seldom realizes what a good wife he has until after her funeral.

When a man loses his job his wife says he gave it up on account of his health.

Doctor Cook at least may have found something that looked like the pole.

Secretary Knox's pole has proved long enough to knock Zelaya off his perch.

People who refuse to let well enough alone are apt to make matters worse.

A man fools himself when he imagines other men never tire of hearing him talk.

A college education is many a young man's excuse for not knowing how to earn money.

The clever young widow wants a man to teach her things she knows more about than he does.

It keeps the State Legislatures busy making new laws, as fast as the old ones are broken.

Silly young men get stuck on a pretty girl just as silly flies get stuck on sticky fly-paper.

Before they are engaged he brings her candy in fancy boxes; later on she is lucky to get it in paper bags.

Did you notice the leisurely way in which the Standard Oil Company filed its reply to the dissolution notice?

Speaker Cannon is finding his position embarrassing to him. It has embarrassed the country for a considerable time.

Speaking of the color line, natives of the Solomon Islands in the Pacific are killing white men who marry dusky women.

We once heard of two girls who were heart-broken—one because she couldn't marry a certain young man and the other because she did marry him.

If, as is prognosticated by some students of political economy, the trusts have camped in the guest chamber for an indefinite stay, they must learn not to act like the sugar trust or they will wear out their welcome before we are used to having them around.

(Continued from page five.)

slowly away, muttering thickly to himself. His voice was so low, however, that Phil could not get a trace of his words. He followed the tipsy fellow through to Broadway and then down into a subway station. He boarded the same car with his quarry, taking a seat where he could keep him under constant view.

As the train sped downtown, Phil opened his little grip, and taking out his few tools, carefully stowed them away in his various pockets. Then he thrust the grip on the seat beside him.

"I may need some of the tools," he thought to himself, "but I don't want to be bothered with that bag."

Half-way downtown Gregg appeared to fall in a doze. His head wabbled uncertainly and then fell over on his chest.

"Rotten luck," muttered Phil. "He's gone asleep and I won't be able to learn where he's bound for."

But the sleuth's hope was revived a moment later when the guard came through and roughly shook the drowsy man.

Gregg looked up sleepily and asked what the next station was.

"Spring street," was the reply.

When the train stopped Gregg clambered out and up to the sidewalk. Pry followed at a safe distance. Down through the squalid streets of the lower East Side they went until Gregg finally emerged into the most abandoned section of the city—the haunts of its boldest criminals. Phil recognized each notorious joint.

Suddenly Gregg stopped, looked warily about and then quickly went through the door into "Red Mike's" place—the rendezvous of the most desperate gang of criminals that ever infested New York.

Phil glanced over the forbidding front of the joint, waited a moment and then plunged boldly after Gregg.

CHAPTER VII.

CAUGHT IN RED MIKE'S.

"Red Mike's" place had been known as the resort of criminals of all kinds for twenty years past. Murders had been committed there. Men had been lured there and robbed. And several persons who had been known to enter those forbidding doors had never been seen again by the outside world. What had become of them no one knew, but the supposition was strong that they had met death within, and that their bodies had been secretly made away with.

But no one except the thugs involved knew. Moreover, the enormous booty of the gang had enabled them to buy up part of the police, and they were thus qualified to prevent too close surveillance. It was an axiom of the place that "no one out of Red Mike's was ever convicted."

Into this joint, the reputation of which he well know, Phil Pry calmly strolled. Frosted and curtained windows had prevented any inspection of the interior from without. Inside, Phil saw only the large, bare room of the ordinary saloon. There was the gaudy, bottle-trimmed and glass-decorated bar, the sawdust strewn floor, a dozen small tables scattered about and at each two or three wooden and decrepit chairs. On the walls hung a few cheap pictures of race horses and prize fighters. Behind the bar stood a pair of hard-faced waiters, and grouped about the room stood or sat a dozen or so furtive-eyed men.

Gregg was greeted noisily by all of them, being addressed as "Bun" by several. Shakily he called them to the bar and told the bartenders to give them what they wanted. He himself gulped down a generous allowance of rum. Then, tapping two of the group on the arm, he nodded his head as a sign for them to follow him through the rear door of the room.

Phil, on entering, had taken a chair at a table in a dim corner and ordered a drink, which he secretly allowed to filter to the floor, meanwhile keeping his face well concealed by resting his head on his hand and his arm on the table. He assumed a half-tipsy look until Gregg had disappeared. Then, with a keen glance at the group lined up at the bar, to see that he was not observed, he quietly got up and slipped through the door by which Gregg and his two companions had left. Beyond it he found a narrow passageway, off which opened half a dozen narrow booths, each containing a small table and two or three chairs. Most of them were unoccupied and their doors hung open. But at the far end Phil saw the door of one had been closed and he thought he heard the subdued murmur of voices from within.

Creeping along the uneven floor he reached a spot where he could catch the words of the speakers. He stole into the adjoining booth and swung the door shut. Then he settled himself into a chair close against the thin partition wall.

"Y-you can l-laugh," Phil heard a whispering voice, which, from the stutter he knew to be Gregg's, "but I tell y-you I-I'm l-lucky to be h-here. A fellow with a g-grip of iron h-had his claws on m-me right in the old l-lady's own r-room, and for a m-minute or two I sure did t-think he was goin' to squeeze the very life out o' me. I tried the s-strangle c-clutch on him, too, but I-I m-missed it. I g-guess he'll r-remember the f-feelin' of it for a day or two."

Gregg's voice had the bravado and the uncertainty of a man partly under the influence of liquor.

"Who was this guy?" asked one of his companions.

"I dunno. He k-kind o' puzzled me. He said he w-was f-from the safe c-company, b-but he was t-too sharp-eyed f-for that. I made up my m-mind t-that he was s-some k-kind of a detective."

"Did you leave him there?"

"Y-you b-bet not; the old man c-came in while we were t-tussling and he g-give him the t-throw-out in a h-hurry. G-guess he k-kind o' s-suspected his business there w-wasn't j-just square."

"But about the jewels?"

"Oh, they're g-gone, s-sure enough. I pumped the old l-lady dry about 'em, an I'm s-sure she ain't in on the g-game."

"An' w'at about the old man?"

"Oh, I ain't s-so s-sure about him. He's a slippery old boy. The old lady and him had an awful s-scene over y-your l-little B-Bunny here, and he d-didn't g-get over it w-when I asked h-him to l-let me h-have a hundred. H-he just boiled over c-completely, rung in the f-fat and f-frosty b-butler and r-rung me out," and Gregg's voice died away in a tipsy chuckle.

His two companions held silent a minute, while Phil looked cautiously about to see if he could discover some way by which he might peer into the adjoining room. He wanted to see the faces of the three men more distinctly. He was especially anxious to note how they looked over Gregg. He felt certain that they had some sinister design.

Looking up toward the ceiling of the low booth, Phil found that the partition walls reached not quite to the top, that there was a space of probably six inches by which he could gaze into the adjacent booth. Standing on a chair he would still be a trifle short of the required height, but by mounting the table he could easily peer over the wooden wall. Though the danger of discovery was probable, he decided to make the attempt at a nearer inspection of the three men.

"You ain't got them shiners yoursel' hev ye?" put in a voice Phil had not heard before.

Gregg chuckled, and Phil easily imagined the silly leer which overspread his face.

"Do I l-look it? You d-don't s-suppose I'd h-hang round this joint if I'd swiped a h-hundred t-thousand d-dollars w-worth o' d-diamonds, do you? Not on y-your l-life. I'd be up Broadway n-now, s-spending fifty d-dollars an hour and w-with a j-jag that w-would c-cost a c-cool thousand an' l-ast for s-sixty d-days."

"But there's lots of rich boot left up there, ain't there?"

"H-hope so," stuttered Gregg, whose speech was growing slower as the liquor he had drunk was beginning to overcome his consciousness. "But I'll b-be b-blamed if I could g-get the old l-lady to t-tell me a thing 'bout w-where it lay. G-guess she k-kind o' thought I h-had a h-hand in the b-big g-game."

"Well, in a couple o' days this thing'll be blowed over an' then you kin get in there again and we kin make a quiet haul."

"N-not m-me," answered Gregg more thickly. "Le's have s-some l-liquor." He fumbled over the wall and touched an electric button his hand finally found.

"You ain't goin' to turn down an easy job like that, be yo'?"

"I t-tell you f-fellows I'm n-not g-going t' r-rob m-my own m-mother like t-that. S-she's b-been t-too b-blamed g-good to m-me."

"You're fooling," spoke up the man who had been the spokesman of the trio. "You ain't goin' back on us like that. Ain't we staked you fer a month? Ain't we put you next to a couple of good hauls? An' it's so easy fer us to work up there wi' you with us."

There was a scuffle of feet in the adjoining booth that made Phil more than ever anxious to see the faces of the three men involved in the controversy. Cautiously he stepped on a chair and then slowly rested one foot on the table top. It held his weight firmly. He braced both hands against the side wall and then raised his other foot to the table top. Carefully removing his cap, he raised his head to the partition height and peered over.

Gregg had staggered to his feet and was turning toward the door.

"I've g-got t-to h-have s-some m-more liquor," he muttered. "T-them w-waiters are b-beastly s-slow."

His companions watched him narrowly. One, the spokesman, looked tall and powerful. His face was smooth-shaven, his eyes were mere slits of black, his nose was bent as though it had been broken and had never been properly mended, his mouth was large and his lips thin and cruel. This was Hank Burley, an all-round burglar.

The other was gnarled, bearded and forbidding. A long scar, only partly hidden by his tangled whiskers, showed white along his browned cheek. This was "Bud" Jellup, general aide in any kind of a crooked job.

"I'll be b-back," Gregg muttered as he lolled through the doorway.

The two companions eyed him narrowly as he disappeared. Then "Bud" slammed the door shut behind him.

"I've got an idee," whispered Burley, leaning over the table. "We can't do a thing wi' that guy as a pal."

Phil could hear every word distinctly.

"Wot will we do wi' 'im, then?" growled the other.

"Tie 'im up in the steel room an' send word to his mother that we got t' hev twenty thousan' plunks inside o' twenty-four hours er he's a dead un an' we'll send 'er his paws t' prove it."

Phil shuddered at the dire threat, but he realized that this gang was bold and unscrupulous enough to execute such a plot. But before "Bud" could make reply, the unsteady table upon which Phil stood collapsed, and the young newspaper reporter fell prone in the midst of the wreck.

Before he could rise, the two desperate men from the next booth fell upon him.

CHAPTER VIII.

IMPRISONED IN STEEL.

The sudden fall dazed Phil for a moment and before he could gather his senses and exert his strength the two men—Burley and Jellup—had completely overpowered him. Jellup settled himself firmly upon his victim's chest, while Burley held his legs. Phil, as soon as he recognized his perilous position, tried to wriggle out from their control, but found it impossible to effect his freedom.

The man on his chest was not only squeezing his breath out of his body, but he had also managed to push Phil's right arm beneath him and hold it there. The reporter tried to throw his left arm about Jellup, but the latter easily warded off the attempt. Then he sought to throw Burley from his legs, but that worthy's brutal grip also proved effective against his efforts.

"Who is it, Bud?" asked Burley when Phil's attempts at liberty had come to naught.

Jellup leaned over and scanned Phil's face in the dim light of the narrow booth. He roughly brushed the prostrate man's hair back from his brow and rudely jerked his head around so that the light might strike it more directly.

"Hold on there," gasped Phil under the ill treatment, "you surely don't want to break my neck?"

"'Bout what yo' deserve, you blamed eavesdropper," responded Jellup. "You'll be lucky if it ain't broke a couple o' times afore we git through wi' you."

Then the man on top again thrust his foul, liquor-laden breath close to Phil's face and scrutinized him fully.

"He's a new one to me, Hank," Jellup said. "Never seen any one like 'im afore."

"What you doin' in here anyway, stranger?" asked Burley, giving one of Phil's legs a vicious jerk.

"Can't a fellow come in Red Mike's and get a drink and try to take a rest without being set on and yanked almost to death?" gasped Phil, assuming as far as his position would permit him, an air of injured innocence.

"No 'bjection to that," growled Burley, "but nobody's got any right to sneak up on tables and try to hear what three gentlemen are talkin' 'bout in private without expectin' t' get the worst of it when he happens t' get diskivered."

Before Phil had a chance to rejoin, Burley addressed his pal:

"Can yo' hold him, Bud, till I get some rope?"

"Sure thing," was the prompt reply and by way of ocular demonstration Jellup jumped up and down several times on Phil's chest to the latter's extreme distress. Then he continued:

"But what you goin' to do wi' him?"

"He ain't in here for no good," was the gruff answer. "We don't know what he's overheard. I ain't goin' to take no risk anyway on his usin' it against us. I'm goin' to tie him up and throw him in the steel room for a while till we decide what's to be done."

So saying, Burley rose up and casting a savage glance at the prostrate figure to see if he could recognize the face, he turned and hurried out of the booth.

The sound of his retreating footsteps had barely died away before Phil, summoning all his ebbing strength, managed to drag his pinioned arm from beneath him and then hurl both of them about Jellup's neck.

Taken by surprise, the captor was not quick enough to brace himself as Phil, tightening his arms, drew Jellup's head down against his own. At the same instant he hurled his feet high in the air and, with the rare agility he had possessed since boyhood, turned on his side, throwing Jellup upon the floor beside him.

The thug attempted to secure a counter grip but Phil's neck hold was so tight that he found himself practically powerless. He tried to voice a call for help, but Phil gave his head so severe a wrench that the sound died away like the gurgle of a drowning man.

"Let me get away," panted Phil, quivering under his heroic exertions, "or I'll choke the last bit of breath out of your miserable carcass."

Jellup opened his mouth to make reply, but no sound came. Phil was slowly strangling him.

"It's my only chance to get out of this den," he thought as he beheld the grizzled face of the man in his desperate grip turn a deep red and then a livid purple. He felt Jellup's efforts to free himself slowly die away until he lay almost limp and sodden beside him. Then he suddenly released his hold, leaped to his feet and turned to rush away.

To his chagrin he found the massive figure of Burley barring the narrow doorway. Undaunted he threw himself against the burly man who, heavy rope in hand, glared viciously down at him.

"So, my young friend, tryin' to make a quick getaway, uh?" Burley growled. "Stronger 'an we took you for. Well, we'll soon have you done up safe."

So saying, he clutched Phil by the shoulder and his mighty strength made the young man wince with pain. But he made no outcry.

"Here, you," Burley continued, this time glancing at Jellup who, bedraggled and panting, was slowly dragging himself to his feet, "try it again while I weave this bit of twine about this young hopeful."

A cynical grin crossed the giant-like figure as he spoke. Then, with the assistance of the drooping Jellup, the heavy rope was fastened about Phil's waist and wound about his chest and shoulders and down about his limbs, making him completely powerless.

"Now take him by the neck and I'll take him by the feet and we'll carry him up," ordered Burley.

They picked Phil up thus, slowly bore him out of the booth and down the narrow passageway to a door skilfully concealed in the wall. Up a dark, creaking flight of stairs they slowly made their way with their helpless burden.

Once Phil thought he would cry out an alarm, but he saw that it would only render him liable to further maltreatment. Moreover, the chance of raising help was so slight that he concluded it were wiser to remain silent and thereby possibly avoid the gag. He felt that if he were to be imprisoned, he would like to save his voice for future developments.

At the top of the flight of stairs his captors turned down another narrow hall. Then through another secret door they conveyed him up still another flight of stairs, darker and closer than the first. Phil tried to remember the route they were carrying him, but in the darkness the turns were confusing.

At the top of the second flight of stairs they turned through a passageway, then into another and then, to Phil's amazement, through still a third—a perfect maze.

Then, suddenly in the blackness, they halted and dropped their load unceremoniously to the floor. Feeling along one side of the blank wall, Burley found a button and pushed it. Immediately a thin glow of light showed in a blue electric bulb overhead.

Burley dropped to his knees and drew open a small door in the wall near the floor. From this he extracted a chain on which dangled several heavy keys. Selecting one he applied it to the seemingly solid wall, turned it slowly and then pulled open a heavy door, evidently of steel.

Another key unlocked a second heavy door that swung inward. Burley stepped into the apartment thus unbarred, glanced quickly about in the wavering light and then growled:

"Bring in the fool."

Jellup caught Phil by the feet and pulled him roughly across the double threshold. The reporter's quick eyes with difficulty pierced the gloom. What he managed to see was a room about twelve feet square, in the ceiling and walls of which no opening of any kind appeared except that through which he had been drawn. Beneath him the floor sounded metallic and hollow. An odor, oppressive and deadly, fell upon his nostrils. The hideous thought of a living tomb flashed across his mind. And he was powerless to move.

Burley leaned over him and felt to see that his captive's bonds were secure.

"Well, he's tight enough," he said, rising. "Let's leave him."

Burley turned to the doors. Reaching them he leered over his shoulder:

"We're leavin' you inside a double wall of steel, young man. No use for you to holler for no sound can get through 'em. An' it's no use to break yer bonds 'cause you could never break out o' here. Come on, Bud."

"I owe you somethin'," grunted Bud. "There, take that!"

So saying, he swung his boot viciously against the side of Phil's head. Then he followed Burley out.

Phil's senses wavered under the effects of the kick, then as his ear dimly caught the sound of the door swinging shut and the key turning in the lock, they went entirely out. Helpless as a log, he was left unconscious in a blackness that no human eye could pierce and within walls that no human voice could penetrate.

CHAPTER IX.

A COMPANION ARRIVES.

Phil's spell of unconsciousness did not last long. In less than fifteen minutes his vigorous body began to reassert its strength and sensibility slowly crept back. He was first cognizant of a distressing pain in his head. With hands tightly bound, it was, of course, impossible for him to feel the tender spot, but it seemed to him that a great lump had raised itself.

Nor was that his only pain. His arms and legs were bound so tightly that he felt as if encased in iron. Moreover, the bands tended to interfere with the free circulation of his blood and made him feel weak and dull.

As he lay there in the blackness he had opportunity to review the rapid succession of thrilling experiences he had passed through during the few previous hours and to form some definite theory in the jewel robbery which had led him to his present predicament.

All his ideas tended to the conclusion that the theft had been committed by some one within the house or who had easy access to it. He had long ago dismissed any suspicion against Mrs. Philpot. The fact that she had so long and carefully concealed from her husband the knowledge that she had a son by a former husband was not reassuring, but a study of her face and conduct during the brief time that he was in the woman's apartments intuitively convinced Phil that he would have to look elsewhere for the looter.

Of Philpot himself, the reporter was not so sure. There was something not exactly suspicious but at least uncertain and apprehensive in his manner and the way in which he had abruptly ordered Phil from his mansion caused the latter to hesitate about clearing him of all suspicion without further information. He would wait before deciding finally until he had learned something more of the man's immediate financial condition.

Of Gregg he was still a trifle doubtful, despite his positive assurance to Burley and Jellup of his innocence. If he had been trailing along with as bold and unscrupulous band as Red Mike harbored. It was easy to believe that he could have plotted just such a robbery. Moreover, he had evidently had access to the Philpot home for some weeks which in itself was a reason to view his protestations of complete innocence with reserve.

One other person Phil quickly saw could have committed the robbery. That was the maid, Janet Price. She had access at all hours to Mrs. Philpot's apartments. She knew where the combinations to the strong box were hidden. She undoubtedly had ample opportunities almost daily to open it and extract any or all of its precious contents.

Yet Phil was unwilling to believe that she directly had a part in the robbery. She had certainly viewed him with a keen-eyed suspicion when he first entered the rooms of her mistress to make his bogus inspection yet he confessed candidly to himself that he could not call her appearance suspicious.

Nor, even had her conduct betrayed any trace of fear at the result of his visit, would he have been willing to suspect her either as a principal or accomplice without further and much more convincing evidence.

To tell the truth Phil had been oddly impressed by the girl during the brief moment he spoke with her in the hall following his summary dismissal by Philpot. She was not beautiful but there was an intelligence and air of refinement about her that had caused him to feel very kindly toward her.

Moreover he was puzzled by the strange expressions that had crossed her face when he had riveted his eyes so closely upon her. There was something uncanny in the way her look wavered, something mysterious in the odd clouding of her eyes and the succeeding hesitancy and uncertainty in her words.

"I'm thinking," Phil murmured to himself, "that she could lead me closer to the solution of that mystery than any one else I have come across, but what good are any suspicions I may have now with me cooped in this box of steel and bound so tightly that I can hardly move a finger? Oh, what wretched luck."

Not the slightest sound reached his ears. The hum and the roar of a great city's streets were completely shut out. Even the noises in the building in which he lay a prisoner were completely deadened by these enclosing walls of steel. He began, too, to have some apprehension about the air he was breathing. It seemed heavy and foul. Apparently there was no ventilation in the room and if left long he must inevitably perish miserably from inhaling vitiated air. The place seemed to him a veritable black hole.

Then he grimly smiled to himself as with an effort he managed to roll over on his face in search of a more comfortable position, muttering as he did so:

"I'd give a week's salary about now if I could have a good stretch or two."

Phil had hardly settled himself in his new position ere he heard a key inserted in the inner door and the lock give way. He determined on the instant to simulate unconsciousness, and as the door swung inward and he realized that two or three men were entering he gave no sign in the thin, pale light that streamed through the doorway that he was awake.

"Take him to the other side of the room, Bud." Phil recognized the voice as that of Burley. "Don't leave him near this other carcass."

Then the tread of feet ceased and a weight like that of a heavy body struck the floor.

"There, blame you," continued Burley, "lay there for a while till we get ready t' deal more to th' p'int wi' you."

Instantly it flashed across Phil's mind that this second victim of the steel room must be Gregg. Then one of the newcomers came over to where Phil lay and thrust his foot roughly against the bound man's side.

"Looks ez if this guy hadn't kum out o' that crack I gi' him in th' head," said a voice that was instantly recognized as Jellup's.

"Well, he's better asleep than awake," answered Burley, "till we git ready t' finish 'm off."

Then the pair went out, and Phil, with a sigh, heard the key again turn in the lock. The sound had barely died away, however, before he whispered hoarsely across the room:

"Hello, friend."

"I say, hello," Phil repeated, this time much more loudly.

Still no answer.

Then by dint of much manoeuvering and the expenditure of much strength, Phil managed to roll himself, with many a bump of the head on the hard floor, to the side of the second prisoner.

Again and again he spoke, but he could win no reply. Then in his contortions, his cheek was moistened by something warm it touched on the floor.

"Blood," exclaimed Phil, "I wonder if they have given this poor fellow a mortal wound!"

He lay quite still for a moment, listening carefully to catch the slightest evidence of the other's breathing. He could not hear the faintest exhalation.

"What unheard of brutality," thought Phil, "to leave a human being tied up to die like this and another alongside of him powerless to raise even a finger in aid. The curs will suffer for this if I ever get loose."

Then Phil curled his head as close to the other man's chest as his bonds would permit, and applied his ear against his coat.

"He's living yet," he whispered to himself, "I can catch the faint rise and fall of his lungs. I wonder who the poor devil is, anyway."

The next moment a pain-filled sigh broke from the second captive's throat, followed by a dry and racking gasp.

"What is it, my friend?" whispered Phil.

"W-water," came back the weak and trembling voice of the other. "I'm d-dying!"

This very interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Strange things happen, read it. Watch the Ledger in the coming months and you will find in it some of the most interesting stories ever written. With every month we will try to give you a better and more entertaining paper, so, if you are not already a subscriber, you better send in a year's subscription and have the Ledger regularly. Take our advice and attend to this today.

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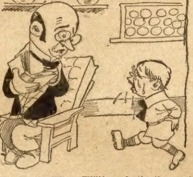

Mr. Bean—Why, Willie, what's the matter?

Willie Bean—Your mother-in-law's daughter just spanked me!

Annoying Curiosity.

Curiosity is natural to man, beast and fowl, in city or country. Young Tommy Jenkins, of a Western city, went on horseback fifteen miles through the country to visit for the first time a farmer's daughter. He was bashful, and hoped to go and come without attracting attention. He went on at full gallop. "He's a-hustlin', for sure," came a voice from the right.

Tommy turned. A man and three boys, milking cows in a barnyard, stood watching, each with a bright tin pail in his hand. Three women, taking clothes from a line near the house, dropped the basket and gazed, their apron-strings fluttering gently in the wind.

The road turned south. Little birds from time to time flew from the ground to the fence and sitting on the top rail, calmly watched the stranger go by.

Suddenly a herd of horses away back in a field came thundering up to the fence, prancing, rearing and neighing. They galloped along the whole length of the field, looking at the horse and its rider.

At a big red house that stood some rods from the road Tommy stopped the horse.

"Please tell me the way to the house of Mr. Perkins," he said to the man at the door.

At once five faces pressed against the window-panes. The old gentleman walked slowly down to the gate.

"Hey?" he said.

"Will you please direct me to Mr. Perkins?"

"Come from the city, I s'pose."

"Yes. Where does Mr. Perkins live?"

"Bookkeeper, I reckon."

"No, I'm a drug clerk. Will you——"

"Dan Perkins' folks ain't sick, be they?"

"No—no—but I——"

"Want to buy some hogs mebbe. That puts me in mind. I've got some of the best shotes in——"

"Papa, I know!" came a girl's voice from the half-open door.

"Oh, you do!" replied the old man, "All right—all right. Follow this road three miles an' you'll come to Dan Perkins'."

The tired horse now walked slowly on. A startled woodchuck fled a little way to its burrow and disappeared. Instantly its head stuck out just far enough to eye the stranger. A rabbit bounded from the road into a field and, wheeling round, stared through the fence with big, solemn gray eyes.

A big, black squirrel, rolled up like a ball, on a limb of a maple tree, was barking. But it stopped, it unrolled. Its body slid behind the limb, its head alone appeared, and its eyes, like little black beads, darted upon Tommy.

The road turned west. A cow two rods from the road stood by a little spotted calf. The cow, looking straight at the stranger, lowed softly, while the calf with quick jumps and sprawling legs darted up to the fence, and, eyeing Tommy, yelled "blare, blare"; then kicking up its little heels, it went scampering back to its parent.

Dusk came. A thick wood bordered the road for awhile.

"Hoo! Hoo! Hoo!" came from afar.

This was too much for Tommy. "None of your darned business!" he yelled to the owl.

Came Home for Dinner.

Supt. Dave Barrett of Chicago was in Cleveland chatting with Peter Carroll, while waiting for a noon train to take him homeward.

"Well," he said at last, shaking hands with his Cleveland confrere, "good-by, old man. Come up to Chicago some morning and have breakfast with me."

"That sounds good," responded Peter, with more attention to expression than purity of diction. "What time do you feed mornings?"

"Oh, about 8 or 8:30," was the reply. "Don't stand upon ceremony—drop right in."

That evening Peter leisurely walked down to the station, hopped aboard the 10:45 train and went to Chicago. En route he was greatly entertained by an address of our water works professor yclept Bemis, who was letting some stranger into the secrets of municipal government. Peter turned in at Toledo, but, being an early riser, slept through but 121 miles of his money and got up again at Goshen. He arrived at Chicago at 7:30 in the morning and called on Dave Barrett, who almost fell out of his slippers when he saw his guest.

"Came to get that breakfast," said Peter, without ceremony. And he got it, too.

At 7:30 that night Peter strolled up-town again and into his office, as if he hadn't been away a minute, nor traveled a mile. He had taken the 10:30 morning train out of Chicago, his visit occupying just three hours.

"I might have waited over until the noon train,' he confessed, "but I met a feller I know who was kicking about a lost trunk, and so I thought I'd rather come home than listen to his kick."

Dreams.

"A remarkable and lucky thing happened to me once when I was dead broke," imparted the aspiring poet. "It was near to the Christmas holidays, and I, needing money badly, sent a poem to a certain magazine. On the third night after I dreamt that my poem had been accepted for $50. Of course when I woke up I was much disappointed. But the very next day, lo! there came the $50 check for verses!"

"Ah, you were in luck."

"Wait. Two days subsequent, back came my poem, accompanied by an explanatory epistle from the editor. In this he said that owing to a dream his treasurer had dreamt the third night previous (same night as mine!) the treasurer, under the impression that his dream was a reality, forwarded my check on his own hook."

"Remarkable indeed! Did you return the check?"

"Oh, no! I sent back the poem, together with a note stating that under no circumstances could I dream of returnnig the fifty!"

Prize "Nerve" Story.

An Abilene woman went to the telephone office with a kick. She said she tried for half an hour to get the answer to a telephone call and she wanted to know the reason why.

"What is your number?" asked the manager.

"Oh, we have no 'phone ourselves," was the astonishing reply. "I was using my neighbor's."

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A Mean Orchestra.

Uncle Wayback (at Metropolitan concert)—I can't make head er tail out o' that tune the fiddlers is playin'.

City Niece (whispering)—It's a symphony.

"It don't seem funny a bit. Who writ it?"

"Beethoven."

"Who's he?"

"A great German composer, uncle."

"Oh, no wonder I can't understand it. But considerin' the price they charge fer tickets, I think they might play it in English."

WOMEN SHOULD KNOW THIS.

Have you tried various remedies for diseases peculiar to our sex? Suppositories and cones are mostly cocoa butter, olive oil or other fats. They can't cure you. Medical Science has discovered that these fats and oils prevent the action of the medicine. You should know why. I want to explain it to you. And I want you to try a remedy which will cure—which contains no oils or fats—just pure medicine that acts quickly and surely. I will send a liberal trial, and the explanatory booklet absolutely free. Address Ella Howard, Box 495, South Bend, Ind.

Suburban Colorings.

Artist (with elevated eyebrows)—Humph! You've been having your house painted, I see.

Suburban Host (proudly)—Yes. Looks gay, don't she?

Artist (with cutting irony)—Why didn't you put on more colors?

Host (apologetically)—The store I went to only had six colors.

FREE ASTHMA CURE.

D. J. Lane, a chemist, at 115 Lane Bldg., St. Marys, Kansas, manufactures a remedy for Asthma in which he has so much confidence that he sends a $1 bottle by express to anyone who will write for it. His offer is that he is to be paid for it if it cures, and the one taking the treatment is to be the judge.

A Roland for an Oliver.

A young Baltimore man, who is quick to see a point and somewhat of a wit himself, walked into a shop the other day and asked for a comb.

"Do you want a narrow man's comb?" asked the attendant, all unconscious of his terms.

"No," said the customer, gravely; "I want a comb for a stout man with rubber teeth."

A Fine Kidney Remedy.

Mr. A. S. Hitchcock (clothing dealer), 886 Carrier Building, East Hampton, Conn., says if any reader afflicted with a kidney or bladder trouble will write to him he will direct them to the splendid home remedy he so successfully used. He is glad to do this and does not wish you to send him money.

Possible Explanation.

Roderick—the astronomers report that there is a great disturbance at the pole on the planet Mars. Wonder what caused it?

Van Albert—H'm! Maybe two explorers discovered it at the same time.

J. P.

Those suffering from weakness and lack of vigor should take JUVEN PILLS. One box will tell a story of marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Made by its originators, C. I. HOOD CO., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, LOWELL, MASS. (2)

An Honest Confession.

Bilkins—Hello, old man! What do you know?

Wilkins—Well, I believe a good many things, but as a matter of fact I don't know anything.

How to Get a Big Mail.

The publishers and manufacturers of the country are anxious to get names of people, so they can send papers, samples and catalogues to them. The Agents' Director List of Indiana, Pa., publish a little book every three or four months. This book has hundreds of names and addresses in it. You can have your name published in this Agents' Directory for only 10 cents in stamps, and you will get many times the cost in the value you receive in the way of free samples and mail. Just send 10 cents in silver or stamps to the Agents Directory List, Indiana, Pa.

As Corrected.

"Tommy," said the teacher to a bright grammar-class pupil, "correct the sentence 'I kissed Jennie two times.'"

"'I kissed Jennie three times,'" replied Tommy proudly.

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Rubbing It In.

"Yes," said Miss Upperson, proudly, "my ancestors came over in the Mayflower."

"I don't doubt it," rejoined Miss Cutting. "I understand only steerage passengers patronized that boat."

All Were Present.

Her Husband — Did you have a lively time at your club this afternoon?

His Wife—I should say not. Every member was present.

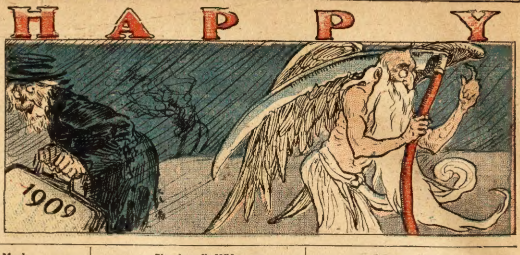
Her Husband —Well, what of that?

His Wife — Why, there was no one to talk about.

Knew His Business.

"Say," said the old farmer, sneeringly, to the city chap who was working in his garden, "what air yew a-goin' t' do when yew git through diggin'?"

"Put a porous plaster on my back," replied the amateur soil disturber.



She Saw Too Much.

She (after marriage)—You told me that I was your first love, but I have found a whole trunk full of letters from all sorts of girls, just bursting with tenderness.

He—I—I said you were the first I ever loved. I didn't say you were the only one who ever loved me. See?

Pleasing His Wife.

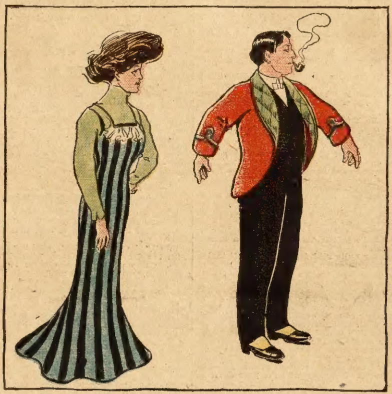
Jinks—Why do you offer such a large reward for the return of that contemptible pug dog?

Winks—To please my wife.

Jinks—But such a reward will be sure to bring him back.

"No, it won't. He's dead."

SAVED HER MONEY.



"But, my dear," says the delighted husband, inspecting the gorgeous house coat his wife had given him on Christmas, "I am afraid you spent too much money for this. Something cheaper would have done me just as well."

"Now," she pouts, "there you go, moralizing over my gift, as usual. But this time you are in the wrong. I didn't spend any money for it."

"You didn't? Then how did you get it?"

"I had it charged."

A Little Change.

Old Friend—Don't you remember sweet Alice, who danced with delight when you gave her a smile, and trembled with fear at your frown?

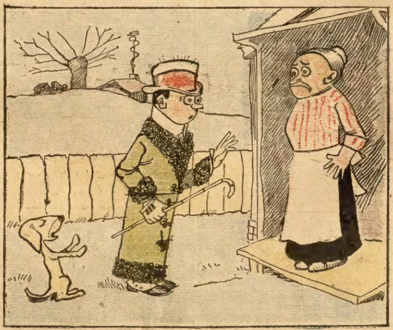
Mr. B Bolt, Jr.—Oh, yes. She doesn't care a cent for my smiles or frowns, either, now. We're married.

A Very Prudent Man.

"I was sorry to hear, Brown, that you have failed in business."

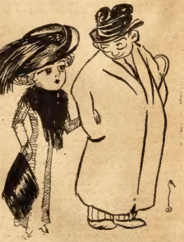
"Yes, I struggled hard, but I lost everything save my honor, thank goodness, and the property I was wise enough to settle on my wife when I found myself getting into trouble."

HEALTH NOTE.



Mr. Askem—Is the water around here healthy?
Mrs. Tibbins—Certainly, sir; we have nothing but well water!

Very True.



Flossie—Harold tells me you are a perfect gentleman.

Reggie—Why, he doesn't even know me.

Flossie—That's what I told him.

All He Knew.

Old Doctor—Has any one been in?

Student—One gentleman called. Said he wanted to know what to do for a cold. He hadn't time to wait, so I told him everything I knew.

Old Doctor—That couldn't have been much.

Student—Oh, I know more than you think. I told him to bathe his feet in hot water, take a pint of lemonade, sponge with salt water, remain in a warm room, bathe the face in hot water every five minutes, snuff up hot salt water, inhale ammonia or menthol, take a ten-grain dose of quinine, and lots of outdoor exercise.

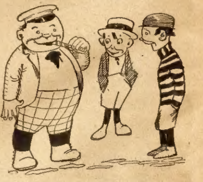
Going at It the Right Way.

Taylor (looking in his bank book)—Well, thank goodness, I'll soon have that two thousand.

Arnold—What two thousand is that?

Taylor—Why, the money I'm trying to accumulate so I can build a thousand dollar house I saw described in a magazine.

Philanthropist.



Boys—Hey, Fat, ain't yer goin' ter give us any o' that candy?

Fatty—Nope, fellers, can't do it. If I gave yer some you'd get fat an' be made fun of jest like me.

Her Reply.

Percy—Miss Blinks is rawther—aw—dense, doncher think?

Reggie—Weally, I nevah noticed it.

Percy—Well, she is. When I asked her last night if I—aw—might be her Cwistmas pwesent, she nevah saw the point at all. She replied that she'd rawther have something useful than ornamental, doncher know?

TRUE FRIENDS.

Two dear girl chums one day
  Resolved to tell the truth
About each other—come what may—
  'Twas the innocence of youth.
The faults of each were pointed out
  For less than half a week;
And now it is somewhere about
  Ten years since they did speak.

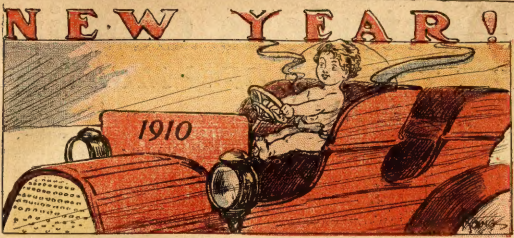
The New Butler.

Mrs. Stubb—I am so glad we can afford to keep that new butler, John. He has been employed by the first families of the town and he is a regular well of information.

Mr. Stubb—Yes, Maria, but you'll find him a dry well.

Mrs. Stubb—Dry well?

Mr. Stubb—Yes; he can't be pumped.



The Chauffeur's Offense

The Judge—Did you arrest this chauffeur for speeding?

The Policeman—No, yer honor; I pulled 'im in fer obstructin' th' road; he was goin' only thirty miles an hour, an' he was complained about by them that was ridin' at th' regular rate.

Brown—That fellow Blinkem is certainly a wonder.

Green — What's the answer?

Brown — Why, he possesses the ability to look interested—and at the same time he doesn't hear a word—when other people tell him their troubles.

A New Idea.

Actor—I can't imagine how D'Art manages to get such favorable notices from the dramatic critics.

Journalist—Perhaps he acts well.

Actor—By Jinks! I never thought of that.

Municipal Jealousies.

New Yorker—You are a stranger here. I presume?

Chicago Man (haughtily)—I am from the great city that New York is jealous of.

New Yorker—Ah! And how are things in dear old Lunnon?

Retrenchment Necessary.

The Dentist—What you really need, madam, is some bridgework.

Mrs. Swiftly—Can't afford it, doctor—too much bridgeplay.

Pills for the Brave.

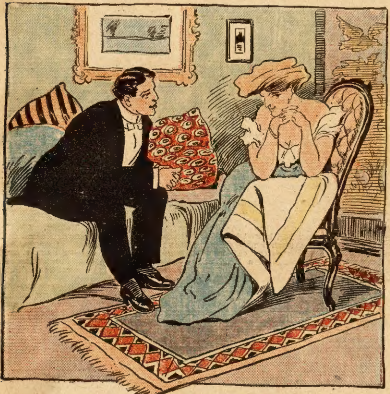
The Lady (to hero who had risked his life to save her little dog from a watery grave, and looks for some reward)—Poor fellow, how wet and cold you are! You must be soaked through to the skin. Here—I'll give you some quinine pills; take a couple now, and two more in an hour's time.

A Cure for Sleeplessness.

Doctor Dryasdust—My dear sir, I have noticed you in our church for the past few weeks, but you are a stranger to me. Have you just joined us?

Stranger—No, sir. I come on the advice of my doctor, who is treating me for insomnia, and who is a member of your congregation.

ECONOMY OF LABOR.



"He is one of the most resourceful lazy men I ever knew."
"Why do you say that?"
"Because, instead of writing out his good resolutions, he cuts the page for January 1, 1909, from his old diary and pasted it under 1910."

EXTENDED CREDIT.

He stole a kiss;
Said the pouting miss;
"For that you'll pay—
On judgment day."
"By Jinks," said he,
"If you'll trust me
Till judgment day
I'll steal some more."
And ere, they say,
She slipped away,
He stole a score.

Most Likely.

"Simpkins' wife is so thoroughbred."

"Perhaps that is why she is always being toasted."

Knew His Business.

"If your eyesight is so bad what are yer hanging around the links fer?" asked the tall caddy.

"Oh, I might get a job," responded the short ball chaser.

"Get a job with bad eyesight?"

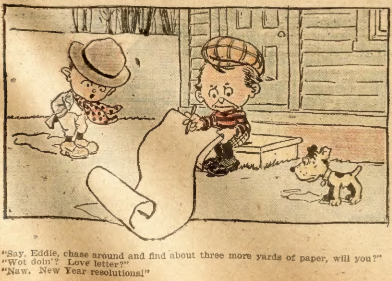
"Sure thing. There might be some spoony couples that want to play this afternoon."

A Vindictive Man.

Mrs. X (away from home)—John, did you leave out anything for the cat before you started?

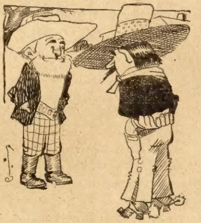
Mr. X (who dislikes the beast)—Yes; I left a can of condensed milk on the table, with the can opener beside it.

QUANTITY NEEDED.



"Say, Eddie, chase around and find about three more yards of paper, will you?"
"Wot doin'? Love letter?"
"Naw. New Year resolutions!"

In the Woolly West.



Broncho Bill—I see they had quite a fracas over in Judge West's office over the election for sheriff. Did Lariat Larry finally get the office?
over the election for sheriff. Did Lariat Larry finally get the office?

Piute Pete—Well, most of it. He got the inkwell in the head, two chairs about the body and a paper weight in the neck.

Decidedly Awkward.

Josh—Were you ever in an awkward position?

Bosh—I am all the time.

Josh—How is that?

Bosh—I have two girls living in the same street.

Loss Valuable Time.

Mamma—Fighting again, Willie? Didn't I tell you to always stop and count thirty when you are angry?

Willie—Yes'm, but it didn't do any good. Look what Jim Johnson did while I was counting.

And the Will.

Hinks—Are you worried about your rich uncle, who is ill?

Jinks—Yes.

Hinks—Is he worse?

Jinks—No; better.

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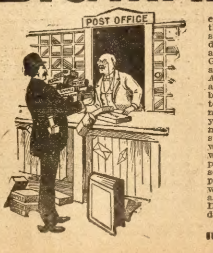

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Londoner—Bah Jove, yes, over in our country the upper classes are much attached to a fish called the sole. Blooming fine fish, too.

American—How funny! That sounds like a shoemaker's report.

Londoner—What, my dear man?

American—Why, the uppers are attached to the sole.

YOUR HEART

Does it **Flutter, Palpitate or Skip Beats?** Have you **Shortness of Breath, Tenderness, Numbness or Pain** in left side, **Dizziness, Fainting Spells, Spots before eyes, Sudden Starting in sleep, Nervousness, Nightmare, Hungry or Weak Spells, Oppressed Feeling in chest, Choking Sensation in throat, Painful to lie on left side, Cold Hands or Feet, Difficult Breathing, Dropsy, Swelling of feet or ankles, or Neuralgia around heart?** If you have one or more of the above symptoms, don't fail to use **Dr. Kinsman's Celebrated Heart Tablets**, the remedy which has made so many marvelous cures. Not a secret or "patent" medicine. One out of four has a weak or diseased heart. Three-fourths of these do not know it, and thousands die who have been wrongfully treated for the **Stomach, Lungs, Kidneys or Nerves.** Don't drop dead like hundreds of others when **Dr. Kinsman's Heart Tablets** will cure you.

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The Mysterious Cousin;

Or, THE TRAGEDY OF A NIGHT

By J. M. Merrill

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Begun in No. 48, November 27. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTE XIX.

GREGERSON did not go in when they arrived at Pine Tree Hill. He went up the steps and rang the bell, which was answered by the maid to whom the young man delivered this new claimant for the name of Iderman.

He went away puzzled and in a measure mystified. He saw nothing of Florence and understood why. She had gone to wed the old Washtenong money-lender. This first Iderman had at least exhibited one good trait in her character by inducing the old man she was to marry to do justice by her friends.

Gregerson had a mission to perform ere he rested. To find the man whom Donald Huddlestone had assured him was the real assassin of Gideon Lake. The young man paused long enough to exchange a few words with his old friend Karl, never once, however, hinting that he had made any new discoveries.

"That old fool came for her in a carriage," said Minwaring, referring to Timothy Huddlestone. "It was a fine carriage, and they rode away in state to be married. What do you think of that young woman now, Volney?"

"She's mercenary as hades!" was the short comment.

"We have all been deceived in her."

"That we have."

"Such a handsome critter to wed that old rack o' bones!"

"Yes," agreed Gregerson, thinking now of the girl he had just left at the house. There was a mystery here. The girl whom they had known as Florence was an imposter—at least one of the two was, which one Gregerson did not know. He asked again after Timothy.

"They went early this morning," explained the old man. "That's the last of 'em I reckon," with a sigh. "Well, let 'em go. I was struck hard myself. If I'd a known she hankered after elderly gents I ain't sure but I should have put in a bid myself. Old Tim has sold everything and with his money in hand he expects to land in California and visit the bride's parents for a spell. Quite a romance, eh?"

To this the younger man assented then took his departure.

A part of that night Volney Gregerson spent on the road to Gardenfield. He rode the swiftest horse belonging to the Lake stables and spared not the lash. At midnight he went to a room in the best hotel and sought a few hours slumber. He had no particularly devised plan. It seemed to him like the proverbial hunt for a needle in a haystack.

His latest idea on falling asleep was to find the Huddelstones and learn something more about the false California cousin. His own little lapse from sturdy manhood where she was concerned made the blushes rise to his cheeks, even though they were hidden by the darkness.

Gregerson was performing his morning toilet when a great commotion aroused him. Some-one was talking loudly and bemoaning a great loss.

"Stop her, somebody," roared a harsh, high-pitched voice which Gregerson at once recognized as belonging to Timothy Huddlestone.

He hastened his ablutions and went forth to learn the trouble. The old money-lender was haggard and ill-groomed. He had evidently passed a sleepless night. To Gregerson he turned at once with his story.

Immediately after their marriage by one of the city ministers they had repaired to a hotel to await the coming of morning before proceeding on their honeymoon journey.

"I thought everything was all right," pursued the haggard old man. "She seemed to think a good deal of me, and I of her. I put the wallet and money under my pillow and was about to retire when Florence quit off all of a sudden; had a sharp pain at her heart, and so frightened me with her groans that I rushed out for a doctor."

"Did you telephone?" asked Gregerson.

"No, I was that rattled I didn't think of that. I made for the nearest doctor's office; was gone, maybe, half an hour. When I returned with the pill-pedlar Florence was gone. She left a note saying she would be back in a few hours—in the morning at farthest, and so I've waited all night, expecting every minute to hear her returning step."

"Rather a horrid honeymoon," chuckled the bell boy.

"Perhaps she is too ill to come," suggested Gregerson.

"I thought of that till I turned over my pillow this morning and found the wallet gone in which was every cent of my money, a little more than fifty thousand dollars! She robbed me," concluded the distracted old man. "Won't somebody catch her before she gets clean away?"

Old Tim was fairly sobbing at the last.

Gregerson thought he comprehended. Light was dawning in his own soul as well as in the brain of the distracted Huddlestone. Florence Iderman was a fraud, an imposter of the worst type. She had induced the old money-lender to turn his property into cash for the express purpose of robbing him and fleeing the country. It was a clever plot and the young land-cruiser half-smiled at its promised success. As for old Tim, he deserved his fate. The Lakes had again come into their own, and as for this crafty old skinflint his punishment was but the reward of merit, or, more properly speaking, of demerit.

"Will you find her, sir?" pleaded old Tim, clasping the arm of Gregerson as a drowning man clutches at straws.

"I don't know about that," said the young man. "The thief is pretty sure to be out of the State by this time."

"But my money!" screamed the old man. "I am ruined unless that is found!"

"And, you know, it may be some one else is the thief," suggested a bystander.

"No, no. See that?"

Huddlestone thrust a crumpled piece of paper into Gregerson's hand. Scribbled in hasty pencil strokes were these words: "Gone for good, old man. Don't look for your little wife. She'll never come back."

Gregerson had seen Miss Iderman's chirography and knew this to be genuine. There could be no longer a doubt of the rascality of the bride. The land-cruiser promised to do what he could and left the hotel. He had very little clew to follow. Boats and trains were leaving Gardenfield at all hours of the day and night. To learn which one the fugitive bride had taken would be no easy matter.

"Get my money back and ten thousand dollars is yours!" was the last pleading outburst of the disheveled and broken old money-lender.

Gregerson believed himself on a double trail. However, it dawned upon him presently that the bogus Miss Iderman might know something worth while with regard to the murder of Gideon Lake. "I will find her to start with," decided Volney. He visited every depot and steamboat office in town without results. He saw official-looking men bobbing here and there, intent like himself in locating the clever woman swindler. And now Gregerson realized that he was to have competition in his search. This fact put him on his mettle. The man who won out would find himself famous, and just now that was about all the incentive the young land-cruiser had for pursuing the runaway.

Gregerson had passed nearly the whole forenoon cruising about town on a fruitless search for clews when he ran upon an uncouth-looking specimen of the "Openings Hobo." The old fellow had halted in a disreputable part of the town and was just dismounting from his shackly old buckboard, to which was attached a bony old horse of unknown years.

"Hallo!" ejaculated the man, whose moist, smutty face looked far from inviting. "I thort I knowed yer."

The disreputable citizen put out a grimy hand. Gregerson took it with pretended cordiality. As they shook, the grin on the old sand-piper's face showed his yellow teeth to the red, inflamed gums.

"I b'lieve ter Satan yer don't know me, Volney?" grunted the man.

"No, you are right, I don't know you," and Gregerson attempted to draw away from the sinister grasp of the other.

"No yer don't," holding fast to the land-cruiser's hand. "Hev yer forgotten Pike Handros, him that saved yer from bein' killed onct on yer dad's rollway?"

"Why, no," exclaimed the young man. "This can't be Pike?" And then the gray eyes of the land-cruiser gazed sharply into the stained face before him. "You are Pike, for a fact. Well, now, I wouldn't have thought it."

The two dropped hands, and the old sand-piper emitted a cheery laugh.

"I'm glad I met you," finally said Gregerson, "but you must excuse me, I have important business in another part of town."

"Say, hold on a minit."

"Well?"

Gregerson faced the speaker once more.

"You're the very man I was lookin' fur," declared Pike. "I reckoned I'd hev ter make a trip clean up ter Washtenong—mighty glad I found yer here. Somethin' curus happened to my place las' night. A hoss, rid by a young 'ooman, ran away and smashed his rider agin er jackpine. Smashed the 'ooman inter fine pieces. She was dead fur one while arter I drug her inter my house. When she did speak she axed fer you. Will yer come, boss?"

"Certainly!" exclaimed Gregerson, a sudden suspicion that it was Florence Iderman who had met with the mishap flooding his brain.

CHAPTER XX.

"I reckon the old 'ooman has got lunch ready," said the plainsman as he drew rein before a dingy old shanty with a leanto at the back. A soiled yet rather comely woman met them at the door.

"No, dinner hain't ready," said she in answer to a query from her liege lord. "The pusson on the bed has tuck on so. She's goin' ter die shore. If this is Gregerson he'd better go to her immediately."

Into a small bedroom at the back of the house our land-cruiser was ushered. He drew a chair at once beside the meager cot and sat down, looking into a white, drawn face, its famed beauty horribly marred with suffering—and yet it was the face of Florence Iderman.

A ragged quilt had been tossed over the torn gray skirt, no effort having been made to remove the injured one's clothing.

"She wouldn't let me tech her, that's why," explained the matron on meeting the eye of Gregerson. "She's jest moaned and called fur Volney. I could do nothin' but jest wait. I 'lowed my old man would find yer ef ther was any sich thing. Wake up, sis, yer man has come." This last to the seeming unconscious one on the bed.

The black eyes opened with a flash, and when they saw Gregerson a smile, wan yet pleased, fluttered the pale lips.

"God, how I hoped—and you did come at last, Volney!"

"Yes," said the land-cruiser. "I came when I knew you were hurt. I trust you will soon be better, Florence."

"Don't, for heaven's sake, don't!" moaned the blood-flecked lips. "I do not expect my sins to be washed away; I am too great a villain for that. It was all for revenge at first, afterward greed for gold kept in the way. Are you listening, Volney?"

"Yes," said Gregerson in a low voice. He placed a hand under the head of the sick one and called for a cup. Into this he poured a bit of the brandy he had thoughtfully brought with him. The injured woman revived and again smiled into the serious eyes of the man bending so kindly above her.

"I am going to die, Volney."

"I cannot believe it is so bad as that, Florence."

"It is, it is, else I should never tell you all my sin."

She gasped with the pain of it all, and he saw plainly that she was more than likely right in her surmise.

"That wretched colt flung me," huskily moaned the lips of the woman. "He was a vicious brute. My skirts got tangled in the stirrups and I was dragged across the ground till a thump against a tree left me almost dead near this house. Give me another sip and then I shall be able to tell all. You have been my friend, Mr. Gregerson, the only one that I would tell this nightmare story to."

She flung her arms across the shabby coverlid, bare now to the shoulders—round, boyish, slim arms that were scratched and spotted with blood. Gregerson shuddered as he gazed—and then something, a ragged red anchor just above the elbow of the right arm, attracted his notice. That birthmark! He had seen it once before. When; where?

"The brandy!" gaspingly called pallid lips.

Half ashamed of his preoccupation, Gregerson administered the potion and the wounded girl seemed to revive. She drew her bare arms back beneath the coverlid and turned her speaking eyes upon the land-cruiser's face.

"I am an imposter, Volney. Ah, I see, you guessed it didn't you? I came to Pine Tree Hill filled with deadly thoughts. I had planned to revenge myself upon the whole Lake family for an insult and ill treatment old Gideon had given me. Constant social meetings with that girl, Lettice, quite unnerved me. I wanted to see the old woman, Lydia Lake, driven naked and a beggar into the streets. That was my plan after I had silenced the chief villain. I did gloat over the rascality of old Tim Huddlestone, knowing all the time that he had been paid. The receipts being lost he had a chance to demand pay a second time and I was pleased thereat.

"Soon, however, the helplessness and tender innocence of Letty touched my heart. I turned my thoughts in another direction. Old Tim became infatuated with me. I made love to the old skinner with a vengeance. When I had him dead gone on me, I made him square things with the Lake estate. You see, I knew that you would marry Lettice, and it was for your benefit as much as anything that I insisted on this.

"I would get what money old Tim could raise, fool him into marriage, rob him and clear out of the country for good. And I should have succeeded had not my wild horse thrown me. I was riding across country to get to a small station on the railway where I could take a train unmolested. I meant to secure a disguise as soon as I got where I could. But that is past. Put your hand in my bosom; the money is all there—fifty thousand in greenbacks. Give—give it back to Tim—Timothy."

With a gasp the narrator sank into unconsciousness.

Two horror-marked faces were near, the ears of the sand-piper and his wife taking in everything.

For a time the inmates of the house thought the girl dead. It required considerable effort to bring her out of the swoon. Gregerson applied himself to the task with nervous energy. He thrust his hand into the bosom of her dress and secured the money, which he concealed on his own person. This he managed without attracting the notice of the others.

A great revelation had dawned upon the brain of the land-cruiser. His face flushed with chagrin and anger when he remembered his own part in the history of the past summer. He, too, had fallen a victim to the wiles of the beautiful Californian. His shame was something pitiful, yet he shut his teeth hard and continued his best efforts at resuscitating the injured one.

"Have I told you all?" queried the fluttering lips of the dying girl, when at length life came slowly back.

"Not quite," said Gregerson, his stern sense of duty bidding him sink all sense of pity at this most important moment. He drew from his pocket the small steel hammer which Don Huddlestone had given him. "Did you ever see this before?"

"The hammer!" exclaimed the dying one. "It is his, Don's. He and I were great chums once, Volney. I often visited him in his rooms. He showed me some of his inventions, among them this little hammer with its spring needle in the side. Where did you get it, Vol—Volney?"

"Of Don Huddlestone. He is in Orton County jail awaiting trial for the murder of Gideon Lake."

"How horrible!" exclaimed the other. "He is wholly innocent; Volney."

"Tell me how it was."

"I went to Gardenfield nursing anger against old Lake. I laid a plan to rob him on his homeward journey. I preceded him to the woods and lay in wait. When he came along I begged a ride. You can guess the rest. I had this hammer concealed in my clothes. When he resisted robbery I struck him in the back of the head. Don had told me how they kill beeves, and this was a pet contrivance of his—for beeves, not humans. I was startled when I saw that Lake was dead. I turned the horse into the woods and left him.

"I had my grip with a change of clothes. I went to a sunken cabin in the gully, opened my valise and donned skirts and a wig. I then went to Washtenong and hired a rig to take me to Pine Tree Hill. I had heard the Lakes speak of the California cousin and at once adopted that role."

"Which you played to perfection," said Gregerson, his face stinging with a hot flush of shame.

"Go back to Lettice," murmured the dying one huskily. "She is true to you as steel. Don was her adviser in law matters, that is all. Further I will say that he has suspected me all along. I dogged him to the hut in the gully that night, encountered you on the trail, and struck you with this same murderous hammer. Once a man gets his hand into crime he never knows when to stop." The speaker gasped and sank rapidly into unconsciousness.

Gregerson stood up and lifted the arm with its tell-tale scar.

"Had I seen that, I should have penetrated his disguise," he muttered. "Ah, but you played the pretty maiden to perfection, Ellsworth Stormer."

"Is she dead?" asked Mrs. Handros in a shuddering whisper.

"I think he is dead," returned the land-cruiser. He turned and went out, baring his face to the blue sky. He did not return inside till the woman announced dinner. Gregerson partook sparingly, after which, ascertaining that the graceless young plotter was dead, he hired Handros to drive him to Washtenong village.

Gregerson gave the body in charge of an undertaker, with full particulars, after which he set about liberating young Huddlestone. The death of the conscienceless bookkeeper straightened out affairs with amazing celerity. The public was soon in possession of the marvelous story, and more than one masculine head was bowed shamefacedly when they realized how very, very near they had come to making abject fools of themselves.

As for old Timothy Huddlestone he left the country soon after getting possession of his money, a sadder, madder, perhaps no wiser man.

It was not till a month later that Gregerson presented himself at Pine Tree Hill. Lettice had heard the whole story. Don Huddlestone continued his visits, but they were aimed at a semi-blonde from California and in no wise alarmed our super-sensitive land-cruiser.

"Now that everything is straightened out," said Gregerson, standing with his gray eyes full fixed on the pink-cheeked Lettice, "I shall cut stick for Oregon, where I now have business interests of a most pressing nature."

"Oregon!" exclaimed the blushing girl. "How dearly I should like to visit that land——"

"Oh, Lettice, will you?" and the hands of big Volney Gregerson caught the fingers of the girl's small hands in a friendly clasp.

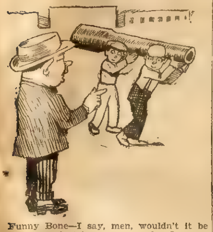
"If I only could; but——"

"You can. Go with me as Mrs. Gregerson. I need some one to watch over me and keep me out of mischief."

She seemed to give consent. At any rate, Florence—the genuine cousin this time—came in upon them in time to catch a pretty tableau—Gregerson holding a young girl tightly to his breast while he rained kisses down upon upturned, willing lips.

The end.

Great Brain.



Funny Bone—I say, men, wouldn't it be more convenient to carry a revolver?

The Judge's Explanation.

There's a prominent judge living in the rural districts of Virginia, where bathtubs are not to be found in every home, who was the proud possessor of such a luxury, which he permitted no one else to use. One day he found that some one had been using his tub, and, reaching the conclusion that it could be none other than Mary, his housemaid, he summoned her to appear before him and charged her with having transgressed his unwritten law.

Mary confessed her fault, and the judge, after enjoining her to sin no more in this manner, as freely forgave her. Observing that the maid seemed somewhat hurt at her "calling down" which he had just given her, the judge, by way of softening his rebuke, said:

"It is not that I object to your using my tub, Mary, but I hate to think that you would do anything behind by back that you wouldn't do before my face."

Hot air is one of the many things it is better to give than to receive.

TWO SUBSTITUTES.

When Jared Lynne, the young superintendent of schools, met with an accident that laid him up for a few weeks his friends came nobly to the rescue.

Among them was a former classmate, Walter Ferris, who volunteered to act as his substitute without salary. He proved so rigid and conscientious in the performance of the duties involved that the teachers and scholars longed for the return of their easy-going superintendent.

When the strenuous young substitute was making the rounds of the different rooms he was troubled and surprised by the disorder reigning in a third-grade room.

The teacher was a little rosebud of a girl, with distracting dimples and crinkly hair. She alone, of all the teachers, seemed unconcerned and undisturbed by a visit from the critical young inspector. She politely offered him a chair, and, handing him the third reader, asked him to conduct the class.

An overgrown backward pupil began the "Song of the Roses." In a sing-song monotone he read, "'Now I am an old rose——'"

Ferris quickly interrupted "Put some expression into it. Listen! 'Now I am an old rose.'"

"'Now I am an old rose,'" again chanted the reader

"No!" snapped Ferris. "You don't get the idea. The rose means that she is no longer a bud. Emphasize 'old' and 'now.'"

"'Now I am an old rose,'" repeated the pupil patiently, and precisely as he had first tendered the line.

Ferris looked bored. The teacher tittered audibly, which encouraged the scholars to a vociferous display of mirth.

"I beg your pardon," explained the teacher to Ferris in an undertone, "but Thomas and I have daily been through that performance. You can't change his rendition of the lines."

Ferris was chagrined, and the longer he remained in the room the more deplorable became the discipline and recitations. It was very evident that this Miss Wright was not adapted to the profession. She was so young, so pretty and so ingenuous that it would be extremely disagreeable to reprimand her.

He lingered after the school was dismissed and tried to intimate to her that things were not going as they should, but she was an artful dodger and steered him from the subject and chatted of outside topics.

Finally he departed. When he reached the door he turned with resolute determination.

"Miss Wright," he began austerely.

She looked up, and he realized that it would be like kicking a kitten to rebuff such a slip of a girl. "Um—I will call again next Thursday."

"Yes, do," she urged, "and maybe Thomas will read to you about the old rose."

He went away angry with her flippancy and with his lack of nerve. The subject filled his thoughts to such an extent that he finally concluded to talk the matter over with Jared.

He found his friend propped up in an armchair. "How are things going, Walt? You have a troubled air. Never mind! I am right on the gain now."

"Everything is going fairly well except in the third grade. Miss Wright is not qualified to be a teacher, is she?"

Jared's long hand stole up to his face. His voice was full of suppressed mirth as he replied:

"Oh, Beth Wright! She was only graduated a year ago. We have to be patient with the young teachers, you know."

"Did you ever visit her room? I never heard such a pandemonium."

"I can't imagine her making or enforcing iron-clad rules, but the children all like her, and she is tactful with the parents——"

"Oh, you should go at the drawing hour.

"I heard her reading class——

She has wonderful success in that line. She'll come along all right.

Ferris went away annoyed and disturbed in mind.

"It's likely I know a good teacher from a poor one. She hasn't one requisite of a teacher. Jared always was easy. I'll bet he is in love with her, or he'd never overlook such laxity. I'll call her down. I'll show her and Jared, too, that I am running things now."

He was so interested in enforcing discipline that he became a constant visitor to the third grade. Each time the disorder was worse. One day when he went in the air was ful of paper wads and there was a sound as of beehives, but the teacher looked a thousand times prettier than he had dreamed she could look.

"Miss Wright," he said, as he rose to leave, "I wish you would come to the library after school tonight."

"Certainly," she said, flushing slightly

Throughout the day he nerved himself up to the proper pitch for the dreaded ordeal. He had himself well in hand when she entered the library.

She was dressed for the street in a long ulster, gray furs and a most becoming turban. He wished that she were unbecomingly dressed or that she had a squint or wore spectacles.

He looked supinely out of the window as he spoke his piece.

"Miss Wright, I am very sorry to be able to say this, but without exception your room is conducted worse than any room in the school. Unless there is improvement I shall have to state so in my report to the board."

He paused, but there was no reply.

"It is not your fault," he continued. "I mean that I am sure that you try, but, pardon me, I think you are not fitted by nature or by education to be a teacher"

"I know I am not," came in a still, small, tremulous voice. "Sometimes I am tempted to take up my hat and run away and leave it all. Then I set my teeth and take a new start."

He sighed in sympathy. How often in the last few weeks he had felt the same way.

"Good night," she said wearily, as she left the room.

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He watched her from the window as she walked down the street.

"I feel as if I had been stealing sheep," he thought. "She's poor, of course, or she wouldn't be teaching. Maybe she has someone to support, and she'll worry over what I said about the board. What business had I butting into Jared's work anyway? If he is satisfied with her, what business was it of mine? I was a driveling idiot and I will tell her so."

He hurried out. She had changed her gait to a brisk pace. Finally she turned into a street that led to the river. On the bank she halted, opened her reticule and drew forth a pair of skates, which she began to put on

"Let me strap that for you," he said, kneeling down and taking the little foot in his grasp. When he had finished his task he looked into her flushed face and shining eyes.

"Oh, dear," she said with a little grimace. "I had just succeeded in forgetting you, and here you are!"

"See here, Miss Wright, I don't know why I made myself so disagreeable. I was too officious for a substitute

"The worst of it is," she said with a sigh, "you were entirely right in what you said"

"Forget it!" he urged. I don't begin to know as much as you do about teaching. I wish I had some skates."

"Oh, I knew you skated," she cried gleefully. "Ned Warner lives in that first white house. His skates would just fit you."

Ferris sought the white house and soon returned with a pair of skates which he adjusted. In silence they glided down the river.

"You skate beautifully," he presently observed

"I am glad you think I do something well," she said.

"See here!" he said, impatiently, "can't you cut the shop! When I said you weren't fitted to be a teacher I meant that you ought to be homely and old and cross and uninteresting, and——"

"You didn't mean anything of the kind," she laughed.

"You know I wouldn't report you to the board, don't you? I wish from the bottom of my heart you didn't have to teach."

"So do I!"

"Miss Wright—Beth, I love you! I know I have been a grouch, but if you will marry me—it wouldn't be as bad as teaching, would it?"

She looked up demurely.

"I only expect to teach two weeks longer. Didn't you know that I was a substitute only? Poor Ella Thorne is ill, and I am trying to take her place so she can have the salary."

"Beth, I am an idiot! Why didn't Jared tell me? After all, Beth, doesn't it put us on equal footing? We are both substitutes, and when our labor of love is finished won't you marry me?"

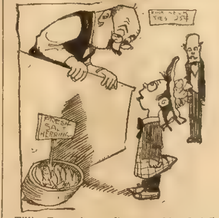
"Jared warned me not to let you make love to me until we had both finished our school work——"

"Beth, do you care for me at all?"

"Of course I care a little, or I wouldn't have minded what you said about my teaching."

Learning without a little common sense is a dangerous thing.

A Reminder.



Tillie—Pa sent me after something but I forgot what it was.

Irritable Storekeeper (explosively)—What the deuce——

Tillie—Oh, now I remember—a pack of playing cards.

She Didn't Like to Tell.

A colored woman of generous proportions was on the witness stand in superior court before Judge Weir, and she made such a good witness for the plaintiff that the attorney for the defense planned to throw "cold water" on what she said by finding fault with her character.

"Let me see you have been arrested, haven't you?" the attorney asked on cross-examination.

"Don't care to 'scuss thawt mattah," she replied shortly.

"But you must answer the question," the attorney told her. "The law requires you to answer, whether you care to or not."

"Well, I ain't been 'rested but once," she said reluctantly.

"Tell us what that was for."

"Now, look a heah," said the witness, getting angry, "do you think I'm goin' to tell all my private business? I guess not."

"I have the right to know, and you must tell me," the lawyer persisted, and Judge Weir instructed the witness that she would have to answer.

"I's 'rested for lickin' my husban'," she said, her eyes flashing.

"That so?" said the attorney with great satisfaction. "What is your husband's business?"

"He's a prize-fightah," she said, and the cross-examination abruptly ended amid general merriment.

Cause of Delay.

He was the bridegroom, and he was waiting at the church.

"I can't imagine why my bride is late," he said.

"Well, you will," replied the best man, "after you're married. They are hooking her dress up the back!"

BOY'S
AND
GIRL'S
CORNER

Rifle and Cabin;

Or, Carl and Roger in the Wilderness

By T. C. Harbaugh

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CHAPTER I.

THE CABIN ON CROW WING RIVER.

"SOME person has been here during our absence. I notice several displacements."

"Yes, Carl, the lamp has been taken from its place on the shelf for one thing——"

"And the cupboard has been looked into."

"But nothing seems to be missing."

"We'll take a look around before we make up our minds as to that. If it's been an Indian——"

"More likely a white plunderer," was the interruption. "I thought they would find us out in time."

The two boys, Carl Main and Roger Roderick had lately come into the West and built for themselves a cabin near the banks of the Crow Wing River in Minnesota. Around them stretched the forest with its gloomy trails and along the streams were game of every description. The boys were stout and courageous and for some time their success at trapping had been phenomenal.

Their cabin was ten miles from the nearest settlement, so that they could truly say that they were in the heart of the ancient wood. Well equipped for life in the forest, they had separated themselves from civilization as it were. The city home was behind them, the joys of the teeming mart had been left behind, and they expected to find health and wealth in that part of the West where life was strenuous and exciting.

An examination of the cabin convinced them that it had been visited during their trip to the settlement for the mail and a few needed necessities.

But who had deftly opened the locked cabin and turned some things topsy turvey?

Only once during their stay in the wilderness had they caught sight of an Indian and no oftener had they seen the footprint of a white man along the streams. Their traps had not been meddled with and they had more than once solaced themselves with the thought that they had found a place where they could live in peace.

But the "other thing" had happened.

Upon examination it was discovered that the door had been opened with a bent wire or a nail, the lock had been picked and whoever the burglar was, he had remained as long as he pleased. In fact, he had been hungry for some cold meats in the larder had disappeared and a mink pelt had followed suit.

"We must put a stop to this sort of thing at once," said Roger, emphatically. "If we are to have peace we must evidently fight for it as our old friend Jerry Cupples would say. The fellow, whoever he is, will come back. Once he has scented our larder he will try again. We must watch for him."

"Ho! what is this?" exclaimed Carl as he drew out from under a plate a bit of paper.

"It wasn't there when I looked in here last," Roger replied and the next moment the two young trappers were bending over the bit of dingy white which Carl held in his hands.

"It's a warning, as I live!" the latter cried as he looked into his companion's face.

"It's nothing else, Roger. Just listen to the scamp."

The following minute Carl was reading aloud as follows:

"Take Notice—You young squatters are warned to remain here no longer. You must pack your traps and get out of this place. You've no business here. If you are here forty-eight hours after finding this notice you'll be dealt with according to the law of the Northwest. It spares no one. So get out and begone.. By order of

"THE DIRTY DOZEN."

"Now that's a pretty name, isn't it?" exclaimed Carl with a laugh as he held the "Notice" at arms' length and gazed at it. "I've no doubt it is properly signed."

Roger took the paper from Carl's hands and looked it over.

"It's a piece of cheek," he said. "I never heard of the Dirty Dozen. It must be an organization of rascals who think they own this part of the universe."

"Well, they must be taught that we have a right to trap here," was the defiant answer by Carl, whose eyes were flashing. "Just as if they owned the otter, the mink, the bear and other wild animals that roam this Western paradise. I wish the captain of the Dirty Dozen would show up to get our answer."

Just then a noise sounded outside the cabin and the young trappers turned toward the door.

As Carl opened it he uttered an exclamation and recoiled.

He was confronted by a singular looking specimen of humanity. A tall, raw-boned man of forty, with a coonskin cap on his head and a long, old-fashioned rifle in the hollow of his arm, stood on the rough step of the wilderness home. His hair was flaming red and his little eyes reminded the boys of those which they had seen above their traps.

"Howdy," said this person in a rough voice. "So you're at home? To tell the truth I didn't have any idea I'd find you chaps here."

As Carl still held the door open the speaker came in and took a seat on one of the stools the boys had fashioned.

"I'm Jehu Potts," said he, looking at the astonished young settlers. "I belong nowhar and have no relations in the world except an uncle somewhere in the East, from where, I take it, you young chaps came from. I calculate you don't know Israel Potts?"

"Not——"

Roger checked his own utterance, for something about the man's face looked familiar.

"Why don't you go on?" asked Mr. Potts. "Seems to me you broke off raythor sudden like."

"I was mistaken," replied Roger with a swift glance at Carl. "I don't think we ever heard of your relative."

"He's a queer one," said Potts. "He used to be rich, but mebbe he's lost his cash."

To this observation the two boys made no reply, but presently their visitor resumed:

"I've been trapping lower down," he said. "Lot's o' game there."

"We find sufficient here for our employment," Carl answered. "Are you acquainted in these parts, Mr. Potts?"

"Kinder so."

"Then you may know of a certain person of whom we have just heard?"

"I kain't say till I've heard more."

"Is there such a band in this neighborhood as the Dirty Dozen?"

The man started as if about to spring from the stool.

"You'll excuse me," said he. "I guess I'll be going. You see I've got to go down the trap line before dark and——"

Carl, with a sudden look at his chum, stepped forward and halted between Mr. Potts and the door.

"Pardon me," said he, eyeing the fellow closely. "You look as if you might belong to the Dirty Dozen."

"Me?" almost roared Potts, who was now on his feet. "What, Jehu Potts a member of that band?"

"You haven't denied it, Mr. Potts," said Carl, coolly.

"But I do now. Young chaps, you will excuse me I say if I refuse to discuss the Dirty Dozen."

"Then the organization really exists? What right has it to warn people from these parts?"

"Have you been already warned?" almost gasped Potts.

"Yes, and here's the warning," and Carl held out the paper, from which the man seemed to shrink. "What would you do if you got such a notice as this?"

"By hokey, I'd go!" cried Jehu Potts.

"You'd show the white feather, would you?" Carl continued. "You'd say to the Dirty Dozen that you were a coward——"

"I'd save my neck anyhow."

"Have you ever been served with a notice to go?" put in Roger.

"I kain't say that I have," was the reply. "But let me tell you, fellows, what I know."

"Go ahead," said Carl.

"Last year three trappers settled over in Injun Creek. They got the paper two weeks after they had built their cabin. What did they do but laugh at it. One morning three bodies dangled from as many limbs along the creek. Next came a fellow who came from Ohio. He was alone. He was served by the Dirty Dozen, laughed at it and never went back to the Buckeye State."

"But who constitute the outlaw band?" cried Carl Main.

"That's just what no one knows," said Mr. Potts. "Nobody ever saw one of them till it was too late. They come in the night, so 'tis said, an' when they go they leave death behind them. You'd better go, young chaps."

For a moment neither of the boys spoke.

"We haven't made up our minds," Carl said at last. "This is a serious question. One hates to leave such a great trapping ground as this."

"It beats the world and that's why the Dirty Dozen wants to run the whole ranch."

With this Mr. Potts looked anxiously toward the door, and Carl stepped aside.

"Take my advice, boys," he continued. "If the Dozen ever tells Jehu Potts to vamose the ranch you'll see an individual of my size gettin' out o' this kentry at a two-forty gait. Good morning."

For a few seconds Carl and Roger watched the vanishing figure of their visitor in silence. As it disappeared over a little rise and the trees that topped the summit grew ghostly in the waning light of day, the door was shut.

"What do you think?" exclaimed Carl as he turned upon his companion. "We've got our orders."

"And Mr. Potts says it's death to remain."

"Death at the hands of the Dirty Dozen."

"Yes. Evidently Mr. Potts would carry out his declaration of flight were he served with a notice to go. But I say, Carl, did you notice anything familiar about the looks of our late visitor?"

"Only one thing, but the thought is absurd," was the reply.

"What's that?"

"You remember what an excitement the disappearance of Israel Potts raised several years ago?"

"Yes, and the ten thousand dollars reward for information concerning him."

"Exactly. Now this Mr. Potts claims to be the missing man's nephew. But it's absurd, as I say, Roger. It's merely a coincidence of names."

"But how would our caller know of Israel Potts?"

"That is a little strange, to say the least: but what say you, Carl, about the warning notice?"

"I say this," exclaimed Carl Main as his face went white and his eyes glittered defiantly. "I say stay and fight it out. We've got just as good a right to this region as any set of outlaws and I for one don't propose to be run out by the Dirty Dozen."

"Good! I'm with you to the end, Carl!" was the reply.

CHAPTER II.

A GIRL AND A BEAR.

Carl and Roger, after consultation, agreed upon a plan which they hoped would soon convince them of the proximity of the band called the Dirty Dozen.

At the same time they resolved not to be driven from the trapping grounds by a lot of robbers, for that was just what they considered the rascals to be.

Their line of traps was situated along Crow Wing River and it was their custom to visit them together. Hereafter but one would go, while the other remained at the cabin to watch it. There was no telling how soon the scamps would turn up to see what disposition had been made of the warning. If both were absent the cabin might be fired by the desperadoes and their home in the wilderness would no longer shelter them. Nor was this all. Without a shelter they would indeed be at the mercy of the band, for the forest would not protect them from the base designs of the Dirty Dozen and they would fall an easy prey to the rapacity of the two-footed wolves.

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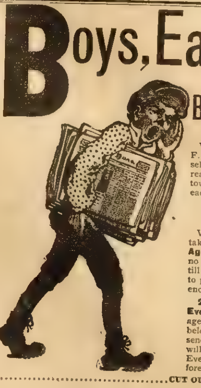

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The next morning Carl set out for the traps leaving Roger in the cabin.

"Keep up a good watch, Roger," admonished Carl as he departed. "Let no one get the upper hand of you. You've got weapons at your command and remember that every man's house is his castle."

"I'll do my best," was the reply. "No one gets the best of me without a fight."

It was a bright, crisp day in November. The great forest into which the young trapper had plunged wore the golden hues of autumn and the sky overhead was a rich blue.

After Carl's departure Roger took a little scout around and came back to the cabin. There was a little work for him there. A few pelts needed scraping and he set to work, going to the window from which he could command a view of the landscape beyond.

He was busily engaged when he heard a loud voice, and upon looking out he descried a strange sight.

Just beyond the cabin stood a pony, upon which was seated an Indian girl. She looked romantic in her woodland dress, and for some time Roger gazed spellbound at her.

"I never saw the like of that before," said he to himself. "She's a pretty girl and I'll wager a mink that she can handle that pony, which looks rather wild."

At this moment the girl guided the cayuse nearer the cabin and caught sight of the wondering youth at the window. Roger left his work and went to the door.

He was greeted by a captivating smile from the young maiden, who waved him a cheery good morning.

"How white boy like the woods?" she queried.

Roger was astonished at her command of English.

"We're just beginning to get acquainted with the land," said he.

"Blue Bird been her all her life. Her father is Black Panther, the great chief of the Sioux."

"Won't you dismount and come in?"

The Indian maid took him at his word and sprang lightly from her mount. The following moment she stood within the cabin, looking around with considerable astonishment.

"White boy all alone?"

"No, my partner has gone to the traps."

"Traps catch much?"

"So far we've been having good luck. Game seems to be plenty hereabouts." glanced out.

"No one steal game?" she asked as she Blue Bird drew nearer the window and picked up the pelt which Roger had been dressing.

"Not yet. Are there thieves in this country?"

"Bad white men," was the reply with a nod.

"Do you mean the Dirty Dozen?"

At this the girl started and drew back. Then of a sudden she came forward and laid her hand on the boy's arm.

"Have they been to white boys' cabin?" she asked.

"Oh!" ejaculated Roger, with a little laugh which was forced. "We've been notified."

With this he drew from his pocket the warning note which he placed in Blue Bird's hands. The girl looked at it a moment and then silently handed it back.

"We're going to defy the rascals!" said he.

"White boys going to stay?"

"Yes, that's just it. We don't intend to be driven off by a lot of villains."

"White boys very brave!" was the response, and Roger thought he saw a light of defiance flash up in the red girl's eyes.

"Some people, Jehu Potts, for instance, would call it foolhardiness on our part, but we've built this cabin here by hard work and we don't like to give it up at the threat of a band of strangers whom we have never seen."

For some moments the Indian girl stood silent and then retreated to the door.

"White boys must be careful," said she with a finger resting on her lips. "The great woods are full of bad men."

"So it would seem. But you? Did you come to warn us?"

"No," with a shake of the head. "Blue Bird saw white boys' cabin the other day and thought she would ride by it."

"I thank you for the visit," said Roger, still admiring the dark eyes of the Indian maid. "It's good of you, I'm sure. One likes to find friends in a new country, and it's a real pleasure to find one in the red race."

The Sioux seemed to take his words in the nature of a compliment, for her gaze sought the floor, and for a second she seemed to blush.

In another moment she was beyond the door and at her pony's side.

She vaulted upon the animal's back with the agility of a girl acrobat, and, speaking to the beast, was soon galloping down the open.

"She looks like a real red princess," commented Roger while he remained in the doorway, watching the girl out of sight. "Blue Bird, is it? Something tells me that I haven't seen the last of this Sioux maiden. I only wish Carl could have been here."

With his head full of the strange visit of the chief's daughter, Roger returned to his occupation. An hour passed, then another and at last he began to look for his comrade. If Carl had met with no accident he would soon return and he was anxious to tell him about his visitor.

At last, according to his calculation, Carl was overstaying his time and he began to be uneasy.

Taking the rifle from its accustomed corner, he stepped into the open and then walked toward the fringe of the forest, intending to go a short distance down the trail in hopes of seeing his chum.

At last he mounted a fallen tree and looking through the forest in hopes of catching sight of Carl, he held his breath a moment.

Suddenly there darted out from beneath a log the form of a bear, and Roger instinctively threw his rifle into position for a shot. It was the first bear he had seen so close to the cabin and he thought of nothing but a shot since the animal presented such a splendid target, his huge body in the forest light and his head erect as he snuffed the scented air.

Coolly Roger drew a bead on the hoggish-looking head.

As he touched the trigger the log rolled a trifle and he fell from it, landing in a heap of leaves on his back. It was a laughable tumble and he was inclined to smile at his mishap, for he knew that he had overshot the bear thus losing a valuable pelt.

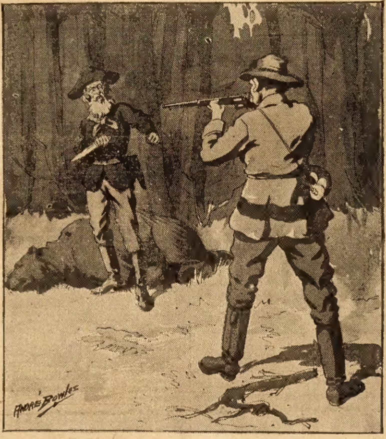
Despite his fall he was on his feet in a moment looking half-sheepishly around, but the next instant his face grew pale and he stood as one transfixed to the spot.

He had not missed the bear, for the animal was lying on his side, but he was not alone.

A rough-looking man, dressed in frontier garments was kneeling over the carcass, and though his back was turned toward the young trapper, Roger was convinced that he was some forest outlaw.

Before he advanced, for he did not like the idea of a stranger claiming his game, the courageous boy reloaded his weapon and saw that it was in good condition.

His footsteps among the leaves gave forth but little sound and he had nearly reached the man's side when that individual turned full upon him with a formidable looking knife in his hand.



"That bear belongs to me."

"Ho! and who might you be?" demanded the fellow as he glared ferociously at Roger.

"I'm the person who shot the bear," was the reply and he waited to see how the man would take his words.

"You're quite sure o' that, are you?" was the answer. "Well, I'm here to dispute your words."

"Then who shot Old Ephriam?"

"Captain Selkirk, at your service."

"Are you Captain Selkirk?"

"I'm no one else, young sir. I have the run o' these woods and I don't acknowledge any superior in this world."

Roger hardly knew what to make of these audacious words. The man appeared to be past sixty, but his eyes were sharp and defiant and the young trapper concluded that he would make a desperate enemy.

"It's my bear, I say!" continued the man, rising to his feet and facing Roger. "Where do you think you hit the beast?"

"I aimed for the head, but the log upon which I was standing, rolled as I touched the trigger and I went down. I might have hit the bear elsewhere."

"Oh!" laughed the man. "You say you might have hit him elsewhere? Well, now that's cool, to say the least. You don't suppose I'll give up the carcass on that sort o' proof?"

By this time Roger's blood was up. He didn't like the idea of losing what he really believed belonged to him, and, then, he was maddened by the insolence of the man who called himself Captain Selkirk.

Stepping back suddenly he threw the rifle to his shoulder and covered the man before he could lift a hand or reach for the gun which lay among the leaves.

"That bear belongs to me! I see a hole in his head just back of the ear," said Roger with all the coolness he could muster. "My ball went true to its target despite my little mishap. You will go away and let me have my own."

In all his life he had never seen such a look as he got from Captain Selkirk. That worthy's face darkened as if a cloud had passed over it, and he seemed to gnash his teeth for very rage.

"Your bear, eh?" he almost hissed. "You've got the drop on me. I see that, but it will be a sorry day for you and your pardner if you press the trigger."

"Give me the bear!" came warningly over the barrel of Roger's rifle.

"Take it!" cried the man as he fell back. "Under no other circumstances would I surrender it. It's a long lane that turns not. Captain Selkirk, of the Dirty Dozen, will see you later!" And with this threat the man moved off.

Roger Roderick's heart went suddenly into his throat. He had encountered the captain of the desperadoes!

CHAPTER III.

"JACKSTRAW."

The astonishment of the young wilderness hunter had not abated when he heard a cheering sound in the forest and upon looking up he beheld Carl approaching. The expedition had been successful, for Carl had half a dozen good pelts in his possession, and the moment he came up his gaze fell upon the carcass of the bear. His gaze wandered from the huge carcass to Roger.

"I see you've not been idle," said he with a smile.

Thereupon Roger related his adventure, to all of which Carl listened with rising curiosity.

"So you've met the captain of the Dirty Dozen?" said he.

"Yes, the renowned Captain Selkirk."

"And he said he would see you later?"

"Such were his words."

"Good! The rascal has put us on our guard. We'll take care of the bear first, however."

The carcass was dragged to the cabin where the pelt was stripped off and the meat put away.

When night came the boys did not retire, but remained awake. They believed that they were doomed to have another visit from the wilderness pests and concluded that they would not be caught napping. Despite Selkirk's added threat they again resolved that they would not be forced from the country, but would remain and fight it out with the outlaws.

The night gathered dark about the cabin on Crow Wing River.

The two young trappers, with their rifles near at hand, awaited the coming of the enemy, but hours passed with nothing to break the monotonous stillness of the forest but the hoot of an owl.

All at once a light rap sounded at the door and the young watchers started.

Roger, rifle in hand, went to the portal and laid his hand on the latch.

"Who's there?" he asked in guarded tones.

"It's a friend."

The voice was strange and the boy hesitated. He might be deceived.

"Who is the friend?" he asked.

"Men call me Jackstraw."

Both boys laughed at the answer, and Roger soon afterward replied:

"Go to the window."

A noise outside told him that his command was being obeyed and Carl lit a match and held it close to the glass. Both boys gazed at the face pressed against the pane. It was a face they had never seen before.

For a moment they were undecided what to call it—white or red; but they at last decided that it was the face of a white boy of their own age.

"Where are you from?" asked Carl.

"From everywhere," was the reply.

"What do you want?"

"Shelter for the night. It's going to storm."

"I'll trust that face," Roger said. "It looks honest, though it is not handsome," saying which he unbarred the door and Jackstraw entered.

At sight of the boys he held out his hand and looked into their faces.

"I'm an orphan of the forest," said he with a painful smile. "It is no wonder that I'm not always trusted. This scar on my face doesn't add to my beauty. I got it from Captain Selkirk."

Carl and Roger started at mention of the terrifying name.

"You'll let me cuddle up on your hearth, won't you?" continued the youth.

"We'll give you the best we've got, but it's not much," Carl replied.

"It looks like a palace to Jackstraw," was the reply. "I'm tired. I came from the settlement."

"Rosebud Ranch?"

"Yes, and I ran nearly all the way, ha,

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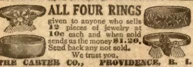

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ha! Poor Jackstraw," and with this the boy dropped upon the floor, and before the young trappers could speak again was sound asleep.

After watching their lodger for a little while Carl and Roger turned in themselves and the cabin became the abode of silence.

All at once Roger found himself sitting upright on the couch.

What had awakened him he did not know. He rubbed his eyes and attempted to pierce the gloom that prevailed, but ineffectually.

Cautiously lighting a match he sent its light across the floor, and to his surprise discovered that Jackstraw was missing. The following minute both boys were on their feet.

"There he is!" exclaimed Carl, pointing toward the door, and sure enough at the latch stood Jackstraw, his face as white as death and his hand clutching a revolver.

"The wolves are out there!" he exclaimed the moment he saw he had been noticed.

"I heard them not," said Roger.

"Ah! don't I know the tread of the wolves of the river?" ejaculated Jackstraw. "Don't I know Captain Selkirk and his forest band?"

"Oh!" exclaimed both boys at once. "Are they out there?"

The strange youth nodded.

"Then we must fight," said Carl through his teeth. "They came a little sooner than expected, but their welcome shall be none the less cordial."

The boys soon had possession of their weapons and allowed Jackstraw to retain the revolver, for they had begun to look upon him as a needed ally.

Outside everything was still.

If the Dirty Dozen had come they were very quiet, which indicated mischief. For some time all remained on guard.

"They must have departed," ventured Carl at last.

"Let Jackstraw out to see."

"Not by the door," was the reply. "You can get up the chimney, though it wasn't built for such a purpose."

"Good!" cried the forest waif, and before the boys could detain him he was vanishing up the ample chimney. They heard him for a few moments and then all was still as before.

Minutes seemed hours to the young trappers in the darkness of the cabin.

Presently sounds came down the chimney and something dropped at their feet.

It was Jackstraw.

"What is the news from without?" asked the boys at the same moment.

"They've been here."

"Captain Selkirk and his gang?"

"Yes."

"Did you see them?"

"No, but they left this on the door," and Jackstraw placed a piece of paper in Carl's hands.

Roger hastily struck a match and both boys bent over the object brought back by the forest waif.

The rough and uneven writing on the yellowish sheet was brief but emphatic. It ran as follows:

"We rule the Northwest. When we come again we'll leave ashes and swinging forms.
"THE DIRTY DOZEN."

Jackstraw leaned forward, looking into the blanched faces of the wilderness hunters.

"What does it say?" he inquired anxiously.

Roger read the writing for the boy.

Jackstraw shook his head.

"I told you so," said he. "A year ago Jackstraw had a little shack in Pigeon Creek. He was finding lots of game. It was Heaven to poor Jackstraw, but the whirlwind came."

"A storm, you mean?"

"A human storm," was the significant reply. "In a moment Jackstraw's shack was in flames and he was running through the forest with a gash across his face. For days he wandered half-dead in the woods. He nearly died from hunger. He had to catch birds with woodland snares for food."

"Well?"

"Jackstraw knew who the wolves were. They were Captain Selkirk and his band."

"The miscreants!" cried Roger Roderick. "I wish we could measure arms with these outlaws."

"Once," continued Jackstraw, "they entered Rosebud. Their visit has never been forgotten. They burned the postoffice——"

"We never heard of that at the settlement."

"No, the people there are afraid to breathe the name of the desperado captain," said Jackstraw.

"He must be a terror. But look here!" and Roger again held the warning before Carl's eyes. "Look what this note is written on."

"That is better paper than you see in the wilderness," said Carl, as he fingered the little sheet. "I remember seeing such paper only in the office back East."

"That is what made me take notice," Roger returned. "How came Captain Selkirk in possession of such paper? You can see the watermark in spite of the yellowness of the page," and he held the sheet between him and the light.

"So you can!" cried Carl. "It is the private mark of the Epluribus Mills and they belonged to——"

"To Israel Potts, the missing millionaire!" finished Roger.

"True, Roger. It's a great mystery. The output of the Epluribus Mills was taken by the United States Government, though it was said, as you remember after Potts' disappearance, that he likely appropriated some of the paper himself."

"I distinctly remember reading of that in the newspapers at the time."

"Then, how came some of that paper in the hands of the captain of the Dirty Dozen?"

Before an answer could be returned something seemed to fall against the door, and the young wilderness hunters sprang forward, weapons in hand.

"Open, white hunters!" cried a voice in accents of appeal and terror. "Open for the hunted child of the woods!"

There was something in the tones which seemed resistless. Roger's eager fingers threw off the barricade and the door was flung open.

Something that had human shape fell into the room and the door was immediately closed.

"It is Blue Bird!" ejaculated Roger Roderick. "'Tis the child of the great Sioux chief."

On the floor, at their feet, lay the figure of the Indian girl, and the light which Carl held over it revealed a blanched face and closed eyes.

"She is dead!" exclaimed Jackstraw, as he dropped upon his knees.

"No, she breathes! she lives!" cried the boy, Roger.

The continuation of this thrilling story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year; it is worth many times that amount. Send in your subscription, for many great stories that you cannot afford to miss will appear during the coming months.

THE MANIAC SEA CAPTAIN.

The following thrilling circumstances are facts derived from the marine annals of New York. On a bright morning in October, many years ago, an American packet ship in the London trade left the anchorage in the lower bay of New York, and went on her way to sea. She was deeply laden with an assorted cargo. Being a staunch, fast ship, and having experienced officers and a full crew, it was expected that her voyage would be safely and speedily performed.

Captain B., the commander, was an "old sea dog," as the saying is. Boy and man he had spent the best portion of his life on the ocean, and there was no captain sailing out of the port who was regarded as more thoroughly reliable in every particular. He was now advanced in years, and he declared that after a few more voyages he would retire. He had made money, and besides interests in other vessels, owned one-half of the one which he commanded. During the previous voyage there were some peculiarities in his conduct which attracted the attention of his mates, and these peculiarities were mentioned to the agents, but nothing further was thought of them.

The gallant ship passed Sandy Hook, and when well off the shore the pilot left her. The wind was fair, every sail was up and drawing, and a willing crew were putting everything in order for ocean navigation. When the pilot went over the side, he said:

"Captain B., I will report you as having a fair wind and going like a racer."

"Ay, ay," shouted the captain, "let all New York stand by and look. I'm bound to beat everything that floats, or ever will float. Look out for my report from London, or from the bottom of the Atlantic—I don't know which. Ha, ha, ha!"

The language, its tone, and the laugh were all so strange that the pilot could not help turning to give a look of surprise at the face of the captain. This was all, however, and the next moment he was in his boat, tossing amid the waves, while the ship's sails, under orders from the captain, were again filled, and she fairly flew on her way.

The captain of a vessel is a king at sea. His orders are law, and any interference with him or them is mutiny—a crime punishable with death. Hence it can be seen that when the officers of this London packet found Captain B. saying and doing very strange and dangerous things, they had little else to do but submit and obey. This course of action began as soon as the pilot left, and it continued increasing in strangeness from day to day. At length they became convinced that he was either actually insane or bordering upon it. By his orders sail was kept on the ship to a most alarming extent. She was driven not only over but through the monster waves. Great mountains of water fell upon her decks, and it frequently seemed as if she would not again rise to the surface. There was a great strain upon the hull, and the masts bent and twisted perilously. Sails and spars were blown away, but again and again came orders from the captain to repair damages, and set the sails anew. The officers were in the greatest distress of mind, and the crew were muttering and threatening to go in a body to the captain and remonstrate in regard to the state of affairs. But still no one dared to act, fearing the terrible consequences of any conflict with the commander.

Captain B. said little to anybody, except to issue orders. He looked pale, and his eyes had the glassy look observable in those affected with insanity. He walked the cabin and decks with his hands behind him, and at intervals muttered to himself and laughed. It was a fact that he was insane. The malady had been slowly creeping upon him for some time, and now every hour was making it more decided and uncontrollable. For ten days the ship had been navigated by a madman.

One afternoon the weather looked very threatening. It was evident there was to be a severe gale. Still the captain made no preparations for it. In fact, he crowded more sail as the day advanced. Standing on the deck, he shouted:

"You sea-dogs, put on every rag! Winds, blow—blow—blow! We are going no faster than a New York lighter. Be spry, men. Ha, ha, ha! Now she jumps! Blow, ye winds—blow—blow!"

Additional sails were put on. It was the order of the commander, and to refuse might be death. The ship rushed onward, with her hull shivering to the very keel and her masts threatening to snap asunder.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the captain, as he lashed himself to the rail, for there was danger of his being washed overboard.

"Captain B.," said the first mate, coming up with a serious countenance, "the wind is increasing, and we are going to have a heavy blow. It is the judgment of all your officers that sail should be taken in, and not increased."

"Sir," said the captain with a wild glare, "I know my business and my duty, and you are a set of skulking cowards, and do not want to do the ship or the owners justice. She is no harbor lighter—no coaster, but an ocean racer. Begone, sir, to your duty! I shall not take in any sail. Ha, ha, ha! Blow, ye winds—blow—blow!"

The mate turned away with a sad heart. He could not, for a moment doubt, after what he had now heard, that the captain was out of his mind. To every seaman on board there was the greatest peril in keeping on sail, and here was the captain, an old navigator, who under the circumstances could not fail to understand the position, refusing to take it in, and laughing and talking like a maniac.

A crisis was at hand. On—on flew the ship. The clouds grew blacker and blacker—the sea looked wild and ugly. Down went the ship into the vortex, and then she rose, shaking the torrents of water from her, to rush again on her desperate way.

A short consultation of the officers was held, the result of which was communicated to the crew, who received it with a cheer. The first mate then gave an order, which was reported, and in an instant the crew set about taking in sail. As soon as the captain saw it he began to gesticulate fearfully, and cried out:

"Mutineers—villains, I'll hang every one of you! At your peril take in a single sail! Come down on the deck, I say. Fire and fury!"

With wild screams and threats he hastily loosened himself from the rail and started for the cabin. All knew that he was going to arm himself. Consequently, two of the mates intercepted and seized him. In a few moments more he was securely bound.

What little reason there was left departed forever from this moment. His wild screams, oaths, threats, and laughter were heard above the roaring wind. He struggled until completely exhausted, and then lay with glaring eyes wide open.

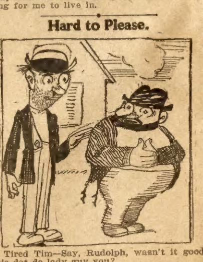
The ship was taken safely into port under the command of the first mate. The action taken with the captain was fully recognized as proper and opportune for the salvation of the ship and all on board. Captain B. was brought back on her return to New York in a most dangerous condition of madness, and was taken at once on her arrival to an asylum. He was confined for some five years when he died. At his most lucid intervals he imagined himself on his ship, carrying all sail, but he was generally violent, and had to be kept under severe restraint.

An Accommodating Pa.

Mr. Slimpurse—Wha-what did your pa say when you told him we were engaged to be married?

Miss Beauty—He was real kind. He said if you would call for him tomorrow with a carriage—he would go with you to look at any brownstone fronts you think of buying for me to live in.

Hard to Please.



Tired Tim—Say, Rudolph, wasn't it good pie dat de lady guv you?

Roadside Rudolph—It was huckleberry pie and de berries was fine, but de huckles was on de blink.

Defective Vision.

The blessing of good eyes is universally conceded in the abstract, but in the concrete it is inadequately appreciated if one may judge from the lack of care taken to preserve it.

The eye is a wonderful organ, but singularly unfitted to cope with the tremendous strain which the present reading and writing age puts upon it. It may seem to be an extreme statement, yet it is safe to say that not one educated reading person in ten has a pair of eyes which can be called perfect.

The most common defect is astigmatism, that is to say, an irregularity in the refracting part of the eye which interferes with correct focusing of what it looked at. What ought to be seen as a point is registered on the retina as a short line. The result of this is that the myriads of points of which every object is composed are seen as lines, and there is therefore a greater or lesser blurring.

Custom prevents the recognition of this imperfect vision, when the defect is slight, but the fault is seen at once when one looks through a glass so ground as to compensate for the irregularity in the eye, for then the image is perceived with a distinctness and sharpness of outline that is a revelation. This astigmatism is often the cause of headaches, dizziness, and other troubles which are unexplained and uncured until the oculist corrects the defective vision by properly fitted glasses.

A Useful Baby.

Speaking of tricks to win the sympathy of juries in criminal cases, Judge Williard M. McEwen, in a recent address before the Illinois State's Attorneys' Association, said: "I know of four cases where a baby played a prominent part in getting the acquittal of the defendant, and I later learned that the same baby had been used in each of the cases, although the supposed mothers in each case were different women."—Law Notes.

Every Lady Read This.

Years ago when I was a sufferer, an old nurse told me of a wonderful cure for Leucorrhoea, Displacements, Painful Periods, Uterine and Ovarian troubles. It cured me in one month. It is a simple, harmless lotion that can be prepared by any one having the recipe. I will send it free to every suffering sister who writes to me. Address Mrs. A. Hudnut South Bend, Indiana.

She Liked Tea.

In Lyons, France, a girl thirteen years old took such a liking to tea in its raw state that she broke into a warehouse and had removed and hidden 400 pounds before she was caught. She ate the tea by the handfuls, and at the rate of two or three pounds per day. She was the daughter of a well-to-do father, and it cost him a large sum of money to keep her out of prison for her robbery. The doctors say that eating so much tea should have killed the girl, but it only made her fat.

To WOMEN WHO DREAD MOTHERHOOD

Information How They May Give Birth to Happy, Healthy Children Absolutely Without Pain—Sent Free.

No woman need any longer dread the pains of childbirth; or remain childless. Dr. J. H. Dye has devoted his life to relieving the sorrows of women. He has proved that all pain at childbirth may be entirely banished, and he will gladly tell you how it may be done absolutely free of charge. Send your name and address to Dr. J. H. Dye, 900 Lewis Block, Buffalo, N. Y., and he will send you, postpaid, his wonderful book which tells how to give birth to happy, healthy children, absolutely without pain; also how to cure sterility. Do not delay but write today.

Exception.

"All things come to him who waits," quoted the moralizer.

"All except the political pie," rejoined the demoralizer. "A fellow has to go after that and tip the pie man."

SECOND-STORY STRATEDGY.

"I have argued and plead in vain, Ronald. Father will not give his consent. When once he makes up his mind to anything, you know he is as firm as the Rock of Ages."

"I hope, Linda," he replied looking into her dark eyes, "that you inherit his firmness. You have promised, you know——"

"Don't doubt my faith, Ronald. But we must win father over. It would be so much pleasanter to have him consent."

"What seems to be his chief objection to me? Lack of money?"

"No, Ron. He says you'll never achieve because of the much you conceive; that you flutter in all ways and fly in none; that——"

"It's better," interrupted Ronald, "to have a lot of irons in the fire instead of one. I guess he'd be glad to flutter or fly by means of my fire escape invention. Did you show it to him—that one I gave you?"

"Yes! and he says it isn't practical; that it only works for a short distance, and wouldn't work but from a second-story window, and that it wouldn't injure any one to jump that far."

"I know it isn't perfected," admitted the youth, "but it is good as far as it goes. There comes your father up from the field now. I'll go and try my persuasive powers."

Linda watched him walk on to meet a lean-faced, square-jawed man. It was evident to her even from a distance that Ronald was monopolizing the conversation.

When her father did speak, it must have been with finality, for the younger man strode rapidly and angrily on to where his horse was hitched. A moment later, he was driving toward town with a speed suggestive of his state of mind.

The lean-faced man came on to the house.

"Linda," he said, his voce coming like the blast of a touring car horn. "I have sent your young snipper-snapper about his business, though I guess he hasn't got any."

"He's a night telegraph operator," interrupted Linda indignantly.

"I have forbidden him the house," continued her father, "and you are not to see him again here or elsewhere. Do you understand?"

Linda raised two sorrowful but steadfast eyes.

"You give me your word that you will not see him?"

"No," she replied reflectively.

"What!" he demanded harshly, "you are going to oppose me?"

"Yes, father; if Ronald can't come out here to see me, I shall certainly go to the city to see him."

"Then," he said grimly, "you'll stay locked in your room until you promise that you will obey me."

"A prisoner for life then—unless I can break jail," she thought as she heard the key turn with a sharp click.

She was a devotee of outdoor life and her heart beat a desolate tattoo at the thought of confinement. After a few minutes of self-pity she began to investigate her chances of escape.

The outlook was not encouraging. If she could pick the lock, she would have to pass her father's door to go down stairs, and he was a light sleeper. She looked out of the two windows. There was neither porch nor balcony to help in descent. A brick wall confronted her.

"Father said it wouldn't hurt any one to jump from a second-story window," she recalled, but——"

Then her memory gave a tiger-like spring. Her heart beat and her spirits lightened. She did her mending, read a novel, ate dinner and supper that were handed in to her, and the day passed quickly.

"Oh, Linda," pleaded her mother, a meek, mouse-like woman who stole into her daughter's bedroom at twilight, "give in! You'll have to, anyway, in the end."

"No, I won't!" replied Linda cheerfully, "But his will is stronger than yours."

"Wit can overcome will, mother, and don't feel sorry for me. I've had a lovely day."

When her mother had left the room Linda arrayed herself in her smartest street attire and sat waiting in the moonlight. Presently she heard the familiar sound of dog and cat being ejected for the night, the footsteps of her parents on the stairs and the far-away sound of their voices; then silence.

She waited patiently for an hour. With beating heart she brought from her closet a box from which she drew forth her young lover's latest invention. Carefully and intelligently she read the directions and proceeded to carry them out.

Selecting the window farthest from the windows of her father's bedroom, she fastened the apparatus to the widow sill. She tried the pulley to see that it was in working order. Then she seated herself on the window sill, feet hanging out, nerving herself to take the final drop.

"If it shouldn't work—if I should be hurled to the ground——"

She fortified herself against such forecasts by recollections of Ronald's assurance that the thing was absolutely safe and simple, that the merest child could descend by its means. With grim determination she put the rope under her arms and fastened it, giving the touch to the pulley.

Slowly, steadily and noiselessly she was lowered to the ground. She slipped off the rope and stole over the grounds until she reached the road. Then she ran for half a mile and caught the last interurban car to the city.

She stopped the car at the telegraph office where Ronald was working as night operator. He had a green shade over his eyes and did not look up as she came forward expecting to receive a message. She wrote one out:

"Ronald the fire-escape is all right."

He glanced at the message, looked up quickly and in a trice was over the counter.

"Linda! You came to me in spite of your father?"

"Yes, Ron—I—ran away! He locked me in this morning because I wouldn't promise that I wouldn't see you. I used the fire-escape you gave me. It was easier than coming down an elevator."

"And I've just worked the thing out to go for any distance, but Linda—wait a moment."

He went to the telephone and called up a fellow-operator.

"I've got a substitute for tonight," he said, coming back to where Linda stood. "We'll go out now and get married, Linda."

"Oh, Ron—tonight? Shall we?"

"Yes; I've carried our license about with me for just such an emergency."

The next morning they drove out to the farm. Her mother met them tearfully at the driveway.

"Come quick!" she urged. "Your father saw that rope hanging down from your window and he took hold of it and went halfway up and it won't budge."

They followed her around the house to Linda's window. There they saw her father suspended in midair.

"It wouldn't hurt any one to fall from a second-story window," quoted Linda.

"It wasn't meant for ascensions," ruminated the young inventor. "I wonder if it couldn't be managed, though, a return——"

"Get me down!" commanded his father-in-law.

"Press that button on the noose—there!"

Slowly and thankfully the farmer returned to his mother earth.

"When did you come down?" he demanded of Linda.

"At 10:30 last night."

"And at 12:30 we were married," announced Ronald. "We came out to tell you."

"You'd better live here with us," said the farmer slowly after a moment's thought, "but I'll never put one cent into this confounded invention of yours."

The sensational account of their marriage illustrated by a sketch of the bride's descent via the fire-escape, proved a profitable advertisement for the invention. It was put on the market and in time it commanded even the respect of the father-in-law of the inventor.

Trick of the Trade.

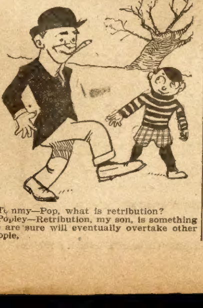
"Great Scott, man!" cried the exasperated guest in the hotel diningroom. "That squeaky phonograph is the limit of all limits. Why, people can't remain at the table over a few minutes while it is playing."

"Ah, that is a little joke of mine," explained the suave proprietor. "That phonograph is a great saver."

"In what way?"

"Why, it gets on the nerves of the diners and they have to leave the table without even waiting for dessert. If the squeaky phonograph breaks down I'm going to put on bagpipes."

Defined.



Tommy—Pop, what is retribution?

Popley—Retribution, my son, is something we are sure will eventually overtake other people.

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We have made a contract with one of the big mills for a lot of woolen shawls.

We are going to give these shawls away to our readers.

The shawls are made of woolen yarn. They come in three colors, black, white or red. These shawls can be used in many ways, as a shoulder shawl, like that shown in the cut, or they can be used to throw over the head.

Probably nothing is so useful in a home as a shawl like this. Just the thing for changeable weather. It is very handy to throw on the head when you run into your neighbor's house. Fine to wrap up the baby in. Throw it over your shoulders when sitting in a draft.

These shawls are large and well made, and we want every reader of this paper to have one of them, so we will send you one **free of all charge,** if you will fill out the coupon below and enclose $1.00 for a year's subscription to this paper.

We send the shawl all charges prepaid. Be sure to state whether you want white, black or red in the proper space below.

This is a splendid offer, and we are glad to be able to distribute these shawls among our readers.

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This prescription comes from a physician who has made a special study of men and I am convinced it is the surest-acting combination for the cure of deficient manhood and vigor failure ever put together.

I think I owe it to my fellow man to send them a copy in confidence so that any man anywhere who is weak and discouraged with repeated failures may stop drugging himself with harmful patent medicines, secure what I believe is the quickest-acting restorative, upbuilding, SPOT-TOUCHING remedy ever devised, and so cure himself at home quietly and quickly. Just drop me a line like this: Dr. A. E. Robinson, 3791 Luck Building, Detroit, Mich., and I will send you a copy of this splendid recipe in a plain ordinary envelope free of charge. A great many doctors would charge $3.00 to $5.00 for merely writing out a prescription like this—but I send it entirely free.

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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

FACTS IN RHYME.

Perhaps some of you have seen the lines that you will find quoted below, but those of you that have not, will be glad to. Information thus condensed into rhyme is more easily remembered than when it is spread out over two or three pages of a text book. It is like the old rhyme, the familiar, "Thirty days hath September."

"How many bones in the human face?
Fourteen, when they're all in place.
How many bones in the human head?
Eight, my child, as I've often said.
How many bones in the human ear?
Four in each, and they help to hear.
How many bones in the human spine?
Twenty-four, like a climbing vine.
How many bones in the human chest?
Twenty-four ribs, and two of the rest.
How many bones the shoulders bind?
Two in each—one before, one behind.
How many bones in the human arm?
In each arm, one; two in each forearm.
How many bones in the human wrist?
Eight in each, if none are missed.
How many bones in the palm of the hand?
Five in each, with many a band.
How many bones in the fingers ten?
Twenty-eight, and by joints they bend.
How many bones in the human hip?
One in each, like a dish they dip.
How many bones in the human thigh?
One in each, and deep they lie.
How many bones in the human knee?
One in each, with kneepan, please.
How many bones in the leg from the knee?
Two in each, we can plainly see.
How many bones in the ankle strong?
Seven in each, but none is long.
How many bones in the ball of the foot?
Five in each, as the palms are put,
How many bones in the toes—half a score?
Twenty-eight, and there are no more.

Blind May's Singing School.

One player must be blindfolded to take the part of the teacher. The rest of the party compose the class, and sit in a line facing her.

She then informs her class that they will begin the lesson by singing the scales. The head girl or the one at the end of the line immediately sings ah! and the next, ah, a little higher or lower, just as she chooses, and so it goes all the way down the line, each singing a note in any way that she may wish. The teacher must listen attentively, and any time she thinks she recognizes a voice, she stops the class and calls the singer by name. If she guesses correctly, she changes places with the pupil, who in turn becomes teacher, but if not, she must keep on guessing.

Every time a new teacher is selected, the whole class must change seats, so that the voices may not be recognized by the direction from which they come. A little variety may be introduced into the game by singing a well-known song instead of the scales, each pupil singing the word which comes to her to supply. It is the privilege of each teacher to direct her class to sing whatever she may choose, either song or exercise.

In Spain.

Spanish children don't have Christmas trees, but they have a very happy time at Christmas all the same. On Christmas eve they stay up late, and have supper with their fathers and mothers, and then —what do you think they do instead of hanging up their stockings?

They go out and hide their shoes and slippers in the bushes, and in the morning they find them filled with all sorts of nice things.

Isn't it clever of dear old Santa Claus to always know just where to put the presents he brings?

HOW HE WENT HUNTING.

Sydney took a shot today
At a little fledgling bird.
"Cruel boy!" I hear you say,
Wait a bit until you've heard
How he did it. First, you see,
Sydney crept up, slyly, near
To the gnarled old apple tree,
Where a nest was built this year.

There, upon a slender twig,
Clear against the great, blue sky,
Perched a birdling just so big,
Making up its mind to fly.
Sydney made a lucky shot.
"Killed it?" No, it liked the fun.
'Twas a snap-shot that he got
With a camera, not a gun!

The Lynx and the Mole.

A Lynx was lying at the foot of a tree; he was whetting his teeth and waiting for his prey. In this state, he espied a mole half buried under a heap of earth which it had raised.

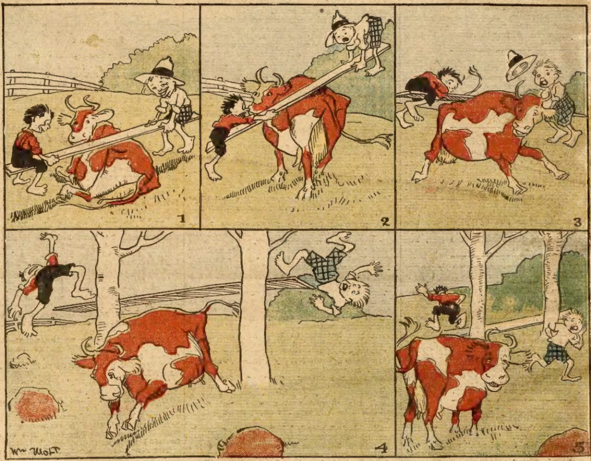
"Alas!" he said to it, "how I pity you, my friend! Poor creature! What a life you must lead! You can't see at all. Surely Jupiter has been most unkind to you, to deprive you of light. You do well to bury yourself, for you are already more than half dead."

"Thank you for your kindness," answered the Mole. "I am quite content with that which Jupiter has seen fit to give me. I have not, it is true, your piercing eyes; but I have an extremely fine and delicate hearing. Listen! I hear a noise behind me which warns me to get out of the way of a danger that threatens you."

Having said this, he buried himself in the earth. At the same instant, the javelin of a hunter pierced the heart of the Lynx.

We ought neither to be proud of such faculties as we have, nor to despise the faculties of others.

SHE LAUGHS BEST WHO LAUGHS LAST.



He Learned About the Cat.

On the closing day of the fair there were Angora cats, Belgian hares, canary birds, parrots, white mice and other fancy animals for sale. William was there with his father and his grown sister, but he had separated from them and was "doing" the fair in his own way.

Among the cats there was one Angora kitten that took his fancy. He thought of little Alice at home, who had wanted to come along to the fair, and decided to buy this kitty for her. It was marked 50, so away he run to find his father and ask for the money. All he told father was that he wanted a half-dollar to buy a surprise present for Alice.

When he asked for the kitten and held out the money, the man said:

"Why, my boy, that kitten is an Angora; the price is not 50 cents, but fifty dollars."

Why are stamps in a sheet like distant relatives? Because they are only slightly connected.

Why would you suppose a clock to be bashful? Because it always keeps its hands before its face.

A Penny or a Fit.

It is estimated that there are in London no less than 1,000 boys and girls who force shopkeepers and householders to give them money in a strange way. They walk into a store or knock at the door of a house and declare that if they are not given a penny they will drop in a fit. It is a sham fit, of course, but some of them can deceive the doctors. If the penny is refused they "throw a fit," collect a crowd around, and those who refused the penny are made to wish they had given a shilling. Fifty of these frauds are arrested every week, but others take their places. It is said that many families are supported on the money thus received.

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